NATION

HC cracks down on pollution, encroachment of Kerala's lake

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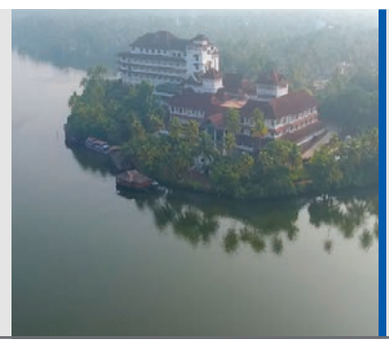

BUSINESS

Market falls for 4th day on selling of banking shares

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SPORTS

Women's boxing fights its way to parity with the men's game

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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INDIA MPs protest against Budget

Oppn alleges discrimination against Opposition-ruled states in the Budget

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

INDIA bloc MPs protested in Parliament premises on Wednesday over the alleged discrimination against Opposition-ruled states in the Union Budget.

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said the Budget is an "assault on the sanctity of India's federal structure".

Besides Rahul Gandhi, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress Parliamentary Party Chief Sonia Gandhi, Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav, several MPs of the Congress, TMC, Samajwadi Party, DMK and the Left joined the protest held on the steps leading up to the Makar Dwar of Parliament.

Protesting against the Budget, Kharge said, "This udget is anti-people, no one has got justice. They have talked about special package but special status has not been given. This is a deceptive budget and injustice to the people."

The INDIA opposition bloc parties, led by the Congress, staged a walkout from the Rajya Sabha, in protest against all states except two being "ignored" in the Budget, an allegation termed "outrageous" by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharamanm, who said all the states never found a mention in any of the previous budgets, including those presented by the Congress.

After Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar rejected notices under Rule 267 that called for the suspension of the listed agenda to take up the issue, Kharge said the Union Budget fprovided funds and schemes for only two states -- Bihar and Andhra Pradesh.

The Finance Minister said she did not name many states either in the interim budget presented in February or in the full budget tabled in Parliament on Tuesday, but that does not mean that government schemes are not working for the states. —*PTI*

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INDIA bloc MPs protest in Parliament premises over alleged discrimination in the Union Budget 2024, during the Monsoon session, in New Delhi, Wednesday; Congress MP Rahul Gandhi meets farmer leaders ***PHOTOS: PTI***

Mataji (Sitharaman) bolne mein toh expert hain mujhe maloom hai (Mataji is an expert in speaking, I am aware of that). Bihar and Andhra Pradesh got pakoda and jalebi on their plates while other states got nothing in Budget

-Mallikarjun Kharge, Leader of Opposition in RS

Is inflation such a trivial subject (that) you (the Centre) can deal with it casually and dismiss it in ten words? In the interiors of India inflation is much higher than data collected. Inflation has been moving for the last four years. When will it arrive at the 4 per cent target?

-P Chidambaram, former finance minister

10% QUOTA FOR EX-AGNIVEERS IN ASSAM RIFLES, CAPF

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

The government has decided to reserve 10 per cent of vacancies in the Central Armed Police Forces and Assam Rifles for ex-Agniveers, Rajya Sabha was informed Wednesday.

A provision has been made for relaxation in the upper age limit and exemption from the Physical Efficiency Test in the recruitment to the post of constable (general duty) and rifleman in the CAPFs and Assam Rifles for ex-Agniveers, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said in response to a written question. "The number of vacancies as of 1 July, 2024, in the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and Assam Rifles (AR) is 84,106 against a total sanctioned strength of 10,45,751," he said. "Cut-off marks for shortlisting candidates for constable/GD has been lowered to get sufficient candidates (especially in categories where shortfalls have been observed)," he said.

"Further, 64,091 vacancies have been notified and are at different stages of recruitment," he said. —*PTI*

Khalistani threatens Indian-origin Canadian MP

OTTAWA, 24 JULY

A prominent Canadian MP of Indian origin said the country was being "polluted" by Khalistani extremists who were "abusing" the freedoms guaranteed under the Charter of Rights, days after a Hindu temple was vandalised in Edmonton, on Wednesday. Amidst rising Hinduphobia in Canada, the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir was vandalised with alleged hateful and anti-India graffiti on Monday in Edmonton. Chandra Arya, a MP from Nepean in the House of Commons, said that separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun of Sikhs for Justice released a video demanding that Arya and his Hindu-Canadian friends go back to India after he (Arya) condemned the vandalism of the Hindu temple. —*PTI*

18 killed as aircraft crashes during takeoff in Nepal

KATHMANDU, 24 JULY

A private Nepalese airline plane crashed during takeoff and caught fire at the Tribhuvan International Airport here on Wednesday, killing 18 people aboard, including a foreigner, while the pilot survived with major injuries. The Nepalese domestic plane N9AME, belonging to Saurya Airlines, was bound for Pokhra for regular maintenance service when the accident occurred at 11.11 am. The Bombardier CRJ-200 aircraft "suffered a runway excursion and burst into massive flames immediately", the Search and Rescue Centre of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal said in a statement. —*PTI*

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Nita Ambani re-elected as IOC member

PARIS, 24 JULY

Indian sports administrator Nita Amabani was on Wednesday re-elected unanimously as member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), ahead of the Paris Olympics. Nita won unanimously with 100 per cent of vote at the 142nd IOC session. "I am deeply honoured to be re-elected as a member of the International Olympic Committee," Ambani said. Ambani was first appointed to join the prestigious body in 2016 at the Rio Olympic Games. Since then, as India's first woman to join the IOC, Ambani has already made great strives for the association, whilst also championing India's sporting ambitions and Olympic vision. — *PTI*

CHAOS IN ASSEMBLY

K'taka passes 4 bills amid Oppn protest

BENGALURU, 24 JULY

Karnataka Legislative Assembly passed four bills on Tuesday despite protests from Opposition BJP members who demanded an immediate discussion on the alleged MUDA scam. The bills passed are Karnataka Irrigation (Amendment) Bill, 2024; Karnataka Municipalities and Certain Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024; Karnataka Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2024; Karnataka Appropriation Bill, 2024.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who is also the Minister for Irrigation, presented the irrigation bill which is designed to tackle the illegal extraction of water from irrigation canals and ensure fair distribution to farmers.

The municipalities bill, introduced by Urban Development and Town Planning Minister Byrathi Suresh, aims to extend the provisions of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike Act, 2020, across the State, allowing taxation of unauthorised buildings in all cities and urban local bodies. The amendment replaced Land Acquisition Act, 1984, with Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, aiming to enhance transparency and fairness in land acquisition. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah presented the goods and services tax bill which will result in collecting the tax on the intra-state supply of goods or services or both by the State government. Additional clause 61 of section 2 of the bill is for ensuring smooth collection of tax with transparency and section 122A for putting a penalty on non-registered machines used for manufacturing tobacco and pan masala products.

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—*Salar News*

BJP & JD(S) MLAs during their night-long dharna against Cong's alleged corruption at Vidhana Soudha, in Bengaluru, on Wednesday ***PHOTO: SALAR***

MLAs get dinner and blankets

BJP leaders staging the "day-and-night" dharna in both the Legislative Assembly and Council over MUDA scam were provided with dinner, pillows, and matresses to sleep on by the presiding officers on the Houses. However, BJP leaders stated that they had refused to accept Speaker UT Khader's offer to arrange dinner for them. —*Salar News*

Assembly may pass 4 bills in upcoming sessions

BENGALURU, 24 JULY

1. Karnataka Land Revenue (Second Amendment) Bill, 2024

This bill aims to provide provisions regarding the appointments, duties and functions of revenue officials. It seeks to address lakhs of pending applications and encroachments as the department is operating with half its staff capacity.

2. Karnataka Medical Registration and Other Law Bill, 2024

The bill aims to prohibit violence against medical service personnel and includes provisions for establishing a council to monitor such cases. It proposes amending Karnataka Medical Registration Act of 1961, introducing a new section that grants the State government the authority to take over cases of violence against healthcare professionals.

3. Karnataka SC\ST and Other Backward Classes (Reservation of Appointments) Bill, 2024

The bill aims to ensure reservation for people from Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and other backward classes in government positions, boards, corporations and universities.

4. Karnataka Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Bill, 2024

Under this bill, the government will engage companies, societies, cooperative societies and NGOs in protecting and maintaining Karnataka's ancient and historical monuments, archaeological sites and remains.

—*Salar News*

No end to coffins in J&K as jawan killed in Kupwara

SRINAGAR, 24 JULY

An unidentified terrorist and a soldier were killed in an overnight encounter in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district, officials said on Wednesday.

The Army and police had launched an anti-terrorist operation in the Lolab area of Kupwara a few days ago following information about possible terrorist movements, the officials said.

The security forces established contact with the hiding terrorists on Tuesday, leading to an encounter, they added.

"Based on specific input regarding presence of terrorists in general area Kowut, Kupwara, a Joint Search Operation was launched by #IndianArmy and @JmuKmrPolice on days leading up to 23 July and 24 July," the Srinagar-based Chinar Corps posted on X.

It said suspicious movements were noticed on Tuesday and the suspects were challenged by vigilant troops. In response, the terrorists opened indiscriminate fire, leading to a gunbattle.

"In the ensuing fire fight one terrorist has been eliminated and a NCO injured. Operation is in progress," the Army added. —PT

Terrorists active in Jammu and Kashmir will either land in jail or be sent to 'jahannum' (hell),

—Nityanand Rai, Minister of State for Home Affairs

TWICE-A-YEAR ANTI-HIV INJECTION SHOWS 100% EFFICACY: STUDY

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

An HIV-preventive drug showed 100 per cent efficacy and "no safety concerns" in women, according to a study published in The New England Journal of Medicine.

Lenacapavir, injectable twice a year, is developed by the US-based biopharmaceutical company Gilead Sciences, Inc. as a pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) drug.

These drugs prevent the spread of infection in people not yet exposed to the disease-causing agent.

The study, a phase-3 trial involving teenage girls and young women in South Africa and Uganda, showed that lenacapavir "demonstrated zero (HIV) infections" and "100 per cent efficacy," Gilead Sciences, Inc. said in a statement. —*PTI*

Trust deficit between farmers & govt, rules SC

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

- The apex court remarked that the state cannot keep the highway blocked all round the year.

Observing that there is a trust deficit between farmers and the central government, the Supreme Court on Wednesday proposed the constitution of an independent committee comprising eminent persons to reach out to the protesters at Shambhu border and address their demands, including a legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP).

The top court directed the Punjab and Haryana governments to suggest the names of suitable individuals for the committee and submit a proposal for removal of barricades on the national highway while ordering a status quo on the border for a week.

A three-judge bench headed by Justice Surya Kant said there is a need for a "neutral umpire" who can inspire confidence between farmers and the government.

The apex court remarked that the state cannot keep the highway blocked all round the year. Punjab Advocate General Gurminder Singh submitted that while Haryana can regulate the movement but the blockade of national highway was resulting in huge ramifications for the economy of Punjab. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

:(
Your device ran into a problem and needs to restart. We're just collecting some error info, and then we'll restart for you.
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PHOTO: PTI

Bug led to outage, claims Crowdstrike

WASHINGTON, 24 JULY

Crowdstrike is blaming a bug in an update that allowed its cybersecurity systems to push bad data out to millions of customer computers, setting off last week's global tech outage that grounded flights, took TV broadcasts off air and disrupted banks, hospitals and retailers.

Crowdstrike also outlined measures it would take to prevent the problem from recurring. —*PTI*

SINGAPORE ON TOP

India at 82 in strongest passport list

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

India's passport has gained two places to 82nd in the latest Henley Passport Index, which ranks countries based on visa-free access for their citizens.

While this indicates a marginal improvement over previous years, India still lags behind its regional counterparts.

Singapore topped the index for the fifth consecutive year, offering visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to a record 192 destinations. . Following closely behind are France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and Japan, tied for second place, with access to 192 countries. In third place, Austria, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, South Korea, and Sweden offer passport holders visa-free travel to 191 destinations.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Further down the list, the United Kingdom shares fourth place with New Zealand, Norway, Belgium, Denmark, and Switzerland, providing access to a significant number of countries. Australia and Portugal share the fifth spot, while the United States has dropped to eighth place, with visa-free entry to 186 countries

Among India's neighbours, Pakistan ranked 108th, Afghanistan at 111th, and Bangladesh at 97th. China, an emerging global power, secured the 66th position.

The Henley Passport Index calculates a country's passport score by counting the number of destinations a passport holder can access without a prior visa. The data is compiled from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the world's largest and most accurate travel information database. —*PTI*

BJP and JD(S) MLCs hold posters during a protest in Legislative Council, at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Wednesday **PHOTO: SALAR**

BJP holds dharna in Assembly and Council over MUDA scam

Speaker UT Khader rejected the Oppn's adjournment motion notice

BENGALURU, 24 JULY

Karnataka BJP on Wednesday announced that it would stage a "day-and-night" dharna in both Legislative Assembly and Council over not allowing discussion regarding the alleged fraudulent allotment of sites to land losers by Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), which involves plots given to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi.

The discussion on the allotment of sites generated heat in the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday as Speaker UT Khader rejected the Opposition's adjournment motion notice on the matter.

The discussion on these allotments heated up the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday as Speaker UT Khader rejected the Opposition's adjournment motion notice on the matter. The ruling Congress, citing rules, urged the Speaker not to allow the discussion. The Opposition BJP, however, claimed a needle of suspicion pointed to the family of the "most important person" in the State and demanded the discussion be allowed. They also alleged a political motive behind the formation of an inquiry commission, suggesting it aimed to deny the House an opportunity to debate the issue.

"After hearing both sides, as the adjournment notice that the Opposition has given is not an urgent matter and as an inquiry commission has been constituted under a retired judge to probe the charges, also as the matter is also not of immediate occurrence, it has been rejected," the Speaker ruled. The legislature session is slated to end on Friday.

The Opposition was infuriated by the refusal to allow the discussion. "Congress has 136 MLAs. When we brought an adjournment motion regarding the Rs 4,000 crore loot in the MUDA scam, the government was scared and ran away from the discussion. They have passed key bills, including the finance bill, without discussion. This government is cowardly; they don't have the courage to respond to MUDA allegations in the House," said Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, R Ashoka.

Ashoka said if the government had any "shame or self-esteem," they should have said on the floor of the House that Siddaramaiah had taken 14 sites in a legal manner, and so did his supporters. "It is a Rs 4,000 crore scam. More than one lakh square feet of land that belonged to Dalits has been looted…Condemning the conduct of the ruling party and the Speaker of suppressing the Opposition voice, all our MLAs and MLCs will protest day and night against this government," he added.

State BJP President and MLA BY Vijayendra too said both in the Legislative Assembly and Council "We will do overnight protest to ensure that injustice is not done to Dalits, sites given to Chief Minister's family are taken back and also over 5,000 sites that were illegally allocated." —*PTI*

Opposition leader in Legislative Assembly R Ashoka sings devotional songs during their night-long dharna against alleged corruption at Vidhana Soudha; Leaders and members of JD(S) party protest against Valmiki board scam, at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Wednesday **PHOTOS: PTI/ MOHAMMED ASAD**

POLITICAL TURMOIL

NDA MPs failed to secure funds for State, alleges AAP

BENGALURU, 24 JULY

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) staged a protest at Freedom Park on Wednesday, accusing NDA MPs representing Karnataka of failing to secure significant funds for State in Union Budget 2024.

AAP State Organising Secretary Mohan Dasari, who led the protest, said, "The voters of Karnataka had high expectations from this Union Budget, but Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has delivered a severe blow by not allocating even a single paisa for State's major projects."

Dasari highlighted the lack of attention given to crucial irrigation projects, including Kalasa-Banduri, Mahadayi, Yettinahole, Mekedatu and Upper Krishna. He also criticised the inadequate funding for Bengaluru's infrastructure development, especially metro and railway projects. Only Rs 350 crore was allocated for the suburban rail project, which falls short of the City's requirements, he said.

AAP members protest against the central government for not giving sufficient grants to Karnataka in Bengaluru **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Highlighting the disparity in budget allocations, Dasari questioned, "How much money has gone to Bihar and Andhra Pradesh? The 19 NDA MPs from Karnataka are good for nothing; they haven't brought a single rupee to the State."

AAP's Bengaluru unit President Satish Kumar highlighted the lack of funds for disaster relief. "When floods hit Karnataka, we pleaded for funds, but they were not released. Now, Rs 11,000 crore has been given to other states as disaster relief. Kannadigas need to wake up and teach BJP a lesson for this neglect," he said.

—*Salar News*

BY Vijayendra asks CM not to politicise Budget

BENGALURU, 24 JULY

State BJP Chief BY Vijayendra on Wednesday attacked Congress government for slamming Union Budget 2024, saying instead of "politicising" it, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah should convince Central government and bring more money to Karnataka.

Siddaramaiah on Tuesday said: "We don't feel Kannadigas were heard (in the budget), and there is no point in attending the NITI Aayog meeting."

Vijayendra said: "Central government, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have given so much to Karnataka. Thousands of crores have been given to infrastructure projects for metros and all the development projects. Despite that, repeatedly blaming Modi and Sitharaman is unfair." He said the budget laid a strong foundation for the vision of 'Viksit Bharat'. BJP leader CN Ashwath Narayan said the budget is "progressive and promising". "The fiscal deficit and overall economic growth have been strongly addressed for all the sectors, poor, farmers, youth and women. In the federal structure, all of us need to participate and 100 per cent utilisation of funds will happen," Narayan said. —*ANI*

State to protest lack of Budget grant

BENGALURU, 24 JULY

Karnataka government has announced plans to protest against allegedly being neglected in the Union Budget 2024-2025. The protest will coincide with a boycott of the upcoming NITI Aayog meeting, which is scheduled to be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday defended the Congress government's decision to boycott the meeting, saying State has got a raw deal in Union Budget and its interests have not been protected.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said on Tuesday the decision was taken as a mark of protest against the "neglect" of the State's demands in the Union Budget. "What is the point of attending NITI Aayog meeting when it doesn't have 'neeti'? The State has not got any projects and its interests have not been protected. We have decided to boycott the NITI Aayog meeting and stage a protest instead," Shivakumar said here.

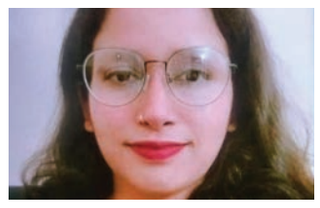
Meanwhile, about BJP's opposition to the proposed Greater Bengaluru Governance (GBA) Bill, Shivakumar said: "They are trying to politicise this. I don't do anything in a hurry, I have only tabled it. Let them debate it in detail and then take a decision. Bengaluru is growing in an uncontrolled way and it needs good governance."

—*PTI*

Bihar woman killed in City PG

BENGALURU, 2 JULY

A 24-year-old woman, Kriti Kumari, hailing from Bihar, was murdered at her paying guest accommodation in Koramangala on Tuesday night. The victim, employed with a City-based private firm, had moved into Bhargavi Staying Homes in VR Layout just two days before the incident. According to the Koramangala police, the assailant, armed with a knife, managed to bypass the PG's biometric security system around 11pm and gained access to Kumari's third-floor room. The attacker inflicted multiple stab wounds on the victim and slit her throat before fleeing the scene. Inspector DM Nataraj of the Koramangala police station told SalarNews that they suspected the accused was known to the victim.



Kriti Kumari **PHOTO: X**

"The suspect's movements were captured on CCTV footage and we are observing it. We have formed a special team to apprehend the culprit," he added Nataraj indicated that the PG management's security protocols are also under investigation. "We are examining all angles, including the possibility of negligence on the part of the PG," he stated. Police are in the process of contacting her family in Bihar. A case under Section 103 of the BNS has been registered. —*Salar News*

ALERT TRAIN LOCO PILOT AVERTS ACCIDENT IN UDUPI

UDUPI, 24 JULY

The alertness of an express train's loco pilot and his assistant helped averted an accident near the Udupi Railway station on Wednesday, officials said. After noticing that a huge tree had fallen on tracks, they managed to stop the train just in time. According to a statement from the Railways, the incident occurred near the Udupi Railway station. After the train was halted, railway workers quickly arrived at the spot to clear the tracks.

According to sources from Konkan Railway, the Matsyagandha Express was on its way from Barkur to Udupi when the crew noticed the tree on the tracks at 9.18 am Acting swiftly, they applied the emergency brakes, bringing the train to a stop without any incident. An overhead equipment team (OHT), responsible for track maintenance, promptly removed the fallen tree, allowing the train to continue its journey shortly after.

In recognition of their timely and decisive action, Konkan Railway CMD Santhosh Kumar Jha presented the train's crew members a cash reward of Rs 15,000 each. —*PTI*

Darshan's wife meets DKS over son's schooling

BENGALURU, 24 JULY

Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa's wife Vijayalakshmi met Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar at his residence in Bengaluru on Wednesday and held discussions.

Darshan, his friend Pavithra Gowda and 15 associates are lodged in jail in the Renukaswamy murder case.

Shivakumar said the meeting was regarding the admission of their son Vineesh Thoogudeepa to his school. "Their son was studying in our school earlier but he was shifted to another school. Now she wants her son to study in my school once again," he said. "I have told her that I will talk to the Principal because there are lots of formalities involved including examination."

Asked whether he would "help her in the Renukaswamy case," Shivakumar said he could not interfere in the police investigation. He said Vijayalakshmi was concerned about her son's education.

Asked if Congress was using suspended MD of Valmiki Development Corporation Kallesh to lodge a complaint against ED officials, he said, "Congress does not need to use anyone. He has filed a complaint and FIR is registered; the court has stayed it. Kallesh was suspended on charges of corruption and law will take its course."

Vijayalakshmi **PHOTO: X**

- Asked whether he would "help her in the Renukaswamy case," Shivakumar said he could not interfere in the police investigation. He said Vijayalakshmi was concerned about her son's education

About tainted JD(S) leader Suraj Revanna's statement that he would reveal everything about Congress and BJP joining hands to finish him, he said, "He is free to unravel anything or anyone."

—*Salar News/PTI*

Boy dies of electrocution while saving pigeon

CHITRADURGA, 24 JULY

A 12-year-old boy was electrocuted to death when he climbed an electric pole to rescue a pigeon entangled in high-tension wires at Hanumapur village in Chitradurga district on Wednesday. The deceased, Ramachandra, saw a stuck pigeon struggling on one of the high-tension wires on the electric pole, according to police. The sixth-grader climbed the pole and came in contact with the live wires. He suffered a shock and died on the spot. —*Salar News*

Indian Coast Guard to aid in search ops at landslide site

BENGALURU, 24 JULY

Indian Coast guard will assist the Uttara Kannada district administration in locating three people who went missing following a massive landslide in Shirur village, officials said.

A truck from Kerala was located in Gangavalli river on Wednesday.

Eight bodies have been recovered so far since the incident on 16 July.

"Once truck has been definitively located in the water and that the naval deep divers will attempt anchoring shortly. The long arm boomer excavator will be used to dredge the river. Advanced drone based Intelligent Underground Buried Object Detection system was also deployed for search.

The Coast Guard will do a helicopter search for missing bodies in water," a statement issued by Karnataka Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda said.

According to officials, three people, including a lorry driver from Kerala are reported to be missing since the incident.

Vehicular traffic has been suspended on National Highway 66 following the landslide. —*PTI*

- The Coast Guard will do a helicopter search for missing bodies in water," a statement issued by Karnataka Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda said

20 CENTRES IN STATE

Govt to start Kannada classes for Malayalis

PHOTO: PIXABAY

BENGALURU, 24 JULY

Karnataka government will launch a Kannada learning programme for Malayalis living in Bengaluru.

Speaker UT Khader will inaugurate the programme at Vikasa Soudha here on Thursday. The learning centres managed by Kannada Development Authority (KDA) will be opened based on demands from the community, KDA President Purushottam Bilimale told Salar News.

"KDA will establish 20 centres across Karnataka, including locations at Christ College, Hosur Road, and Adichunchanagiri Institute of Medical Sciences, Nagamangala Taluk. The classes will start on 1 August. Classes have already begun at Reserve Bank of India on Nrupathunga Road, with around 40 students enrolled," Bilimale said. "The classes and centres are organised by Malayali groups who wish to learn Kannada. We provide the trained teachers," Bilimale said. To meet the demand, KDA is training 30 to 40 teachers. The free classes will be held three times a week from 6pm to 7pm, with each session lasting one hour. The total course duration is 36 hours over three months. Teachers will be compensated with Rs 30,000 per month. Interested individuals can contact KDA to request a learning centre, provided there is sufficient demand. "If we have more than 20 people, it will be easier to conduct classes. However, we cannot teach just one or two individuals separately," the KDA President said. —*Salar News*

Indo-Bangla trade resumes after 2 days of shutdown

KOLKATA, 24 JULY

Trade between India and Bangladesh, which was stalled for the last two days due to the violence in the neighbouring country, resumed on Wednesday. Trade to all major land ports in West Bengal, including Petrapole, Gojadanga, Fulbari, and Mahadipur, resumed after Bangladeshi Customs resumed work and the restoration of the internet link, an export body official said. "Trade has resumed from the Petrapole border since this morning after the Benapole side reopened to receive cargo," Kamlesh Saini, manager of the Land Port Authority of India (Petrapole), told PTI. "Benapole border has resumed functioning. Altogether 220 trucks entered Bangladesh from Petrapole while 27 trucks reached Bangladesh today," said Sajedur Rahman, general secretary of the Benapole C&F Staff Association. *—PTI*

Telangana to boycott NITI Aayog meeting

HYDERABAD, 24 JULY

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Wednesday said his government has decided to boycott the NITI Aayog meeting to be held on 27 July to protest against the Centre allegedly "hurting" the state's rights and not releasing funds due to it. Revanth Reddy announced the government's decision in the Legislative Assembly. "Prime Minister is the chairman of NITI Aayog. NITI Aayog meeting would be held on 27 (July) under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji. As Chief Minister of Telangana, (I am) boycotting the NITI Aayog meeting for hurting Telangana's interests, not releasing the funds due to Telangana and for not giving the permissions due to be given to Telangana," he said. The Assembly passed a resolution against the Centre's alleged discrimination towards the state in the Union Budget after a day-long debate. BJP opposed the resolution. *—PTI*

TMC MLA tried to assault me: BJP's Suvendu Adikari

KOLKATA, 24 JULY

Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, Suvendu Adhikari, on Wednesday alleged that Trinamool Congress MLA Tapan Chatterjee abused him verbally and tried to assault him on the premises of the assembly. Expressing "insecurity" on the assembly premises, Adhikari wrote a letter to Speaker Biman Bandyopadhyay demanding action against Chatterjee. BJP MLA of Nandigram in the letter held Bandyopadhyay somehow responsible for the incident since the Speaker disallowed entry of personal bodyguards of MLAs inside the assembly. "I am to state that today at about 12.20 pm at the lower lobby, Tapan Chatterjee, MLA of Purbasthali, rushed towards me and tried to assault me physically and threw abusive language in front of other MLAs and reporters he wrote to Bandyopadhyay. *—PTI*

9 more TN fishers arrested by SL, Stalin tells Centre

CHENNAI, 24 JULY

Nine fishermen have been arrested, and their two boats have also been taken into custody by the Sri Lankan Navy, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin conveyed to the Centre on Wednesday and urged quick steps for the release of fishers and their boats. Writing to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Stalin sought urgent measures to secure the release of a total of 87 fishermen from the state and 175 boats. On 22 July, 2024, nine fishermen, hailing from Rameswaram and their two fishing boats were taken into custody by Sri Lankan authorities. "I am constrained to point out that during this year up to 22 July 2024 alone, 250 fishermen have been arrested by authorities, the highest since 2014. *—PTI*

RaGa meets farmers, vows to pressurise govt on MSP

A delegation of 12 farmer leaders from 6 states meets Rahul

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi along with farmer leaders speaks to the media at the Parliament House, in New Delhi, on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

INDIA bloc will put pressure on the government and ensure that the farmers get a legal guarantee for MSP, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said on Wednesday after he met a delegation of farmer leaders in the Parliament House complex.

The delegation comprised 12 farmer leaders from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. It apprised Gandhi of the issues being faced by the farmers.

"Our manifesto promised a legal guarantee for MSP. We have done a full assessment and it is feasible. We had a meeting and it was decided that we will have a discussion with INDIA bloc leaders and will try and put pressure on the government to ensure that the farmers get a legal guarantee for MSP," Gandhi told reporters after the meeting.

Later, in a post on X, the former Congress chief said, "Legal guarantee for MSP is the right of farmers. INDIA will ensure that they get this right."

After meeting Gandhi, a farmer leader said, "We met Rahul Gandhi and he gave us a patient hearing. A long discussion took place on our demand for a legal guarantee for MSP. INDIA bloc partners have assured us that they will raise issues of the farmers". *—PTI*

BJP: WILL RAHUL APOLOGISE POST SC'S VERDICT ON NEET

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

BJP on Wednesday accused Rahul Gandhi of fuelling lack of trust in India's examination system following the NEET-UG paper leak at a few places, and asked if he will apologise after Supreme Court's verdict on the issue.

The court on Tuesday dismissed the pleas seeking cancellation and re-test of the exam, holding that there was no evidence on record to conclude that it was "vitiated" on account of "systemic breach" of its sanctity. The court said the leak occurred in a couple of cities.

BJP leader and former union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad hit out at the opposition, especially Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, following the verdict, accusing him of defaming India's examination globally with his strong words.

"Will Rahul Gandhi apologise...," he asked, claiming that paper leaks were rife during the governments led by Congress. *—PTI*

TDP CALLS IT 'DRAMA'

SP President Akhilesh Yadav joins former AP CM Jagan Mohan Reddy during protest against AP government at Jantar Mantar **PHOTO: PTI**

INDIA bloc backs Jagan's protest

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's protest in Delhi against alleged political violence in Andhra Pradesh drew support from unlikely quarters Wednesday, with several INDIA bloc members and AIADMK leaders expressing solidarity.

Telugu Desam Party (TDP), which is in power in the state and a constituent of the NDA government at the Centre, dismissed the YSR Congress Party's allegations as "fake drama".

Reddy's protest at the Jantar Mantar area here is against what he dubbed as a "worsening law-and-order situation" in Andhra Pradesh following the recent elections.

Samajwadi Party (SP) supremo Akhilesh Yadav, Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders Sanjay Raut and Priyanka Chaturvedi, the TMC's Nadimul Haq, and the AIADMK's M Thambidurai were among those who condemned the alleged attacks on YSRCP workers in Andhra Pradesh.

Party MP B Nagaraju said, "Jagan has come to Delhi to do diversion politics. The Jagan government was engaged in targeted violence on TDP members during its tenure."

He also urged Reddy to raise the issues in the Andhra Pradesh assembly instead of protesting in Delhi.

TDP MP D Prasad Rao countered Reddy's claims, and asserted, "What Jagan is saying is all false. No such violence has happened."

YSRCP, which is not a member of the Opposition INDIA bloc, had previously maintained issue-based support to the Modi government. *—PTI*

Bihar Assembly passes bill to curb paper leaks; CM loses cool

PATNA, 24 JULY

The Bihar Assembly on Wednesday passed a bill aimed at curbing the scourge of question paper leaks and other malpractices in recruitment tests by the state.

The Bihar Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, was moved by state Parliamentary Affairs Minister Vijay Kumar Chaudhary and passed through voice vote amidst a walkout staged by Opposition.

Meanwhile, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Wednesday drew flak from the RJD for shouting at Opposition women inside assembly.

Kumar's outburst came as Opposition members stood in the well of the House, demanding that the state's amended reservation laws be incorporated in the 9th schedule of the Constitution to make it immune from legal scrutiny.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar speaks during the state Legislative Assembly session, in Patna, on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Women legislators of the RJD were also in the well shouting slogans like "Nitish Kumar Hai Hai (down with Nitish Kumar)", besides accusing Kumar of being anti-reservation.. *—PTI*

PROTEST AGAINST BIHAR CM

Police personnel wield batons, resorts to lathicharge and use water cannons to disperse Youth Congress activists during their march towards Bihar Vidhan Sabha, in Patna, on Wednesday. They protested against CM Nitish Kumar over various issues, including NEET paper leak **PHOTO: PTI**

In Chh'garh assembly, Cong questions Naxal killings

RAIPUR, 24 JULY

Chhattisgarh legislative assembly on Wednesday witnessed stormy scenes after Congress MLAs raised questions over an encounter in Bijapur district of the state in May this year, and claimed that most of the persons killed in the incident were innocent villagers and not Naxalites.

In the Question Hour, Leader of Opposition Charan Das Mahant asked about the statistics of Naxalite-related incidents in the state between December last year and June this year.

In his reply, Deputy CM Sharma, who also holds the home portfolio, said 273 Naxalite-related incidents, including 92 encounters between security forces and Naxalites, took place during this period.

Nineteen security personnel lost their lives and 88 sustained injuries in Naxalite incidents and encounters, while 34 civilians were killed by Maoists between December last year and June this year, he said.

PHOTO: ANI

Later, Congress MLAs, including former minister Kawasi Lakhma and Vikram Mandavi, raised questions over the authenticity of the encounter near Pidia village in Bijapur district and alleged that innocent villagers engaged in tendu leaf collection were killed by the police.

Refuting their charges, the deputy CM raised an objection and asked them to desist from making such "unacceptable" statements. *—PTI*

Two women's organisations of Manipur's Kuki and Hmar communities took out a rally in Churachandpur district, on Wednesday **PHOTO: ANI**

Manipur women seek probe into killing of 3 in Assam

CHURACHANDPUR, 24 JULY

Two women's organisations of Manipur's Kuki and Hmar communities on Wednesday took out a rally in Churachandpur district demanding an investigation by a Supreme Court judge into the killing of three Hmar men in a police encounter in Assam earlier this month.

The participants of the rally organised by the Kuki Women Organisation for Human Rights and Hmar Women Union walked from Muolvaiphei playground to the Wall of Remembrance near the peace ground here.

Three "terrorists" were killed in an encounter by the police in Cachar district on 17 July, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had said. The family of the deceased people, however, alleged that the encounter was "staged".

"We request for constitution of a Special Investigation Team headed by a judge of the Supreme Court of India for a detailed investigation to understand the facts of the case," two organisations said to Union Home Minister Amit Shah. *—PTI*

Oppn seeks arrest of Guv's son in Odisha assembly

BHUBANESWAR, 24 JULY

Proceedings of the Odisha Assembly were disrupted for the third day on Wednesday, as ruckus continued over the demand by opposition members for action against Governor Raghubar Das's son for allegedly assaulting a government official earlier this month.

As soon as the House assembled for the Question Hour, BJD leaders staged a walkout alleging police inaction over the issue, while Congress MLAs trooped in the well of the House, protesting against the "neglect" towards Odisha in the Union Budget.

Assistant Section Officer (ASO) Baikuntha Pradhan was allegedly assaulted by the governor's son Lalit Kumar inside the Puri Raj Bhavan on 7 July. After the alleged incident, Pradhan was transferred to the home department.

Amid the pandemonium, Speaker Surama Padhy first adjourned the House till 11.30 am, then till 12 noon and subsequently till 4 pm. Padhy has convened an all-party meeting to resolve the impasse in the Assembly.

Governor Raghubar Das **PHOTO: PTI**

Accusing the state's BJP government of "shielding the governor's son", the Opposition BJD has been demanding his arrest and a statement from Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, who is also in charge of the Home Department. BJD and Congress had earlier boycotted Governor's address to the House on the first day of the assembly session on Monday. The Assembly was also adjourned twice on Tuesday. Ruling BJP members Jaynarayan Mishra and Tankadhar Tripathy also sought to counter BJD and Congress MLAs. *—PTI*

CONCLUDES INDIA VISIT

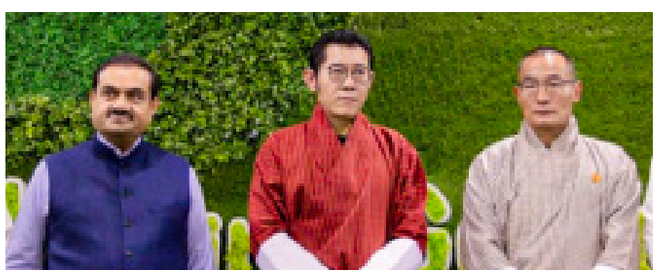
Will strengthen ties: Bhutan PM

AHMEDABAD, 24 JULY

Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, who along with his King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck wrapped up their three-day visit to Gujarat on Wednesday, said the trip would strengthen the ties of friendship between "Bhutan and Bharat".

In the last leg of their programme in the state, the King and PM of the neighbouring nation visited the GIFT City, an upcoming global financial and IT services hub.

"Today, we visited the GIFT City. We are inspired by what has been achieved in such a short time in this Smart City. Our visit here will further strengthen strong ties of friendship between Bhutan and Bharat. On behalf of His Majesty, the King of Bhutan, I would like to thank the chief minister of Gujarat Bhupendra Patel for the wonderful arrangements," said Tobgay. *—PTI*



Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani with Bhutan's king Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, Prime Minister Dasho Tshering Tobgay **PHOTO: PTI**

Arunachal DyCM presents Rs 993 crore deficit budget

ITANAGAR, 24 JULY

Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Wednesday presented a Rs 993.08-crore deficit budget for 2024-25, focusing on infrastructure, urban development and "healthy human resource".

Mein, who also holds the Finance, Planning and Investment portfolios, said the budget estimate is pegged at Rs 35,840.79 crore, a 20.85-per cent increase over the 2023-24 figure.

"Our vision is people-centric and progressive... We are committed to fulfill the aspirations of every person, especially our youth, women and farmers. The key allocations in this year's budget include – Rs 830 crore to improve rural infrastructure, Rs 709 crore for the health sector, Rs 621 crore for agriculture and allied sectors, Rs 337 crore for upgradation of power sector infrastructure, Rs 291 crore for smart urbanisation and Rs 44 crore to upgrade transport infrastructure and services.

Hailing the budget, Chief Minister Pema Khandu said in a post on X: "It gives me immense satisfaction to see Budget for FY 2024-25 placing a strong emphasis on industry-led development, with a key focus on enhancing youth employment and skill upgradation." *—PTI*

Jarange suspends indefinite fast over Maratha quota issue

JALNA, 24 JULY

Maratha activist Manoj Jarange on Wednesday suspended his indefinite fast, which he began five days ago over the quota issue, stating that his community members say they want him alive to fight for the cause.

He announced the decision while addressing media persons at his native Antarwali Sarati village in Jalna district of Maharashtra. Talking to reporters this morning, he said, "My community says they want me alive. There is tremendous pressure from the community." *—PTI*

5 girls drown in 2 separate incidents in UP

SANT KABIR NAGAR, 24 JULY

Five girls drowned in two separate incidents here, officials said on Wednesday. The first incident took place in the district's Bargo village of Bakhira police station area, where a boat carrying four girls —Meenakshi, 17; Kajal, 16; Archana, 15, and Payal, 13— overturned in Bakhira lake, Meenakshi, Archana and Payal died in the incident but Kajal was saved by the villagers. The second incident took place in Khatiyawa village of Dudhra police station in the district. Two sisters, Pramila, 18, and Urmila, 15, were farming on a field when the younger sister's foot slipped and she fell into a pond. Pramila tried to save her but she also fell into the pond and both of them drowned. —*PTI*

Woman, 2 teens killed as building collapses in Gujarat

AHMEDABAD, 24 JULY

An elderly woman and her two granddaughters were killed after a dilapidated three-storey building collapsed in Jam Khambhalia town in Gujarat's Devbhumi Dwarka amid heavy rainfall in the state's Saurashtra region, police said on Wednesday. The incident occurred on Tuesday in Gagwani Fali locality of the town and bodies of the three victims were brought out after a nearly six-hour-long rescue operation that continued till midnight, and five people were rescued, they said. Teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), police and the fire department removed debris that fell on the victims after the building collapsed as a result of heavy rains that continued to batter the region, the police said. The victims are Kesharben Kanjaria, 65, Pritiben Kanjaria, 15, and Payalben Kanjaria, 18. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Mumbai local trains hit as bamboo falls on overhead wire

MUMBAI, 24 JULY

Local train services on the Main Line of the Mumbai suburban network were disrupted after a bamboo structure fell on an overhead wire between Sion and Matunga stations on Wednesday morning, the Central Railway officials said. As a result, the fast local train services remained held up between Sion and Matunga stations for almost an hour, causing hardships for office-goers and others. Due to the delay, many passengers chose to get off the stationary local trains and walk along the tracks, risking their lives, a commuter and train activist said. Local trains are considered lifelines of Mumbai. More than 70 lakh commuters use the services operated by the Central Railway and the Western Railway.—*PTI*

Gang from Dubai involved in forex trading fraud busted

THANE, 24 JULY

With the arrest of a 34-year-old man, the Navi Mumbai police claimed to have busted a gang involved in forex trading fraud from Dubai, an official said on Wednesday. The action was taken by officials of the Evidence Management Centre (EMC) of the Cyber Cell of the Navi Mumbai police. "Gang members operating from Dubai lured the victims into investing in forex trading by promising handsome returns to them. They extracted money from the victims through the debit and credit cards in phases," inspector Deepali Patil of the EMC cyber cell of the Navi Mumbai police said in a statement. In one such case, the accused targeted a victim from Khandeshwar in Navi Mumbai and made him transfer Rs 18,54,255 into different bank accounts and also took Rs 4 lakh, collectively worth Rs 22.54 lakh. However, he did not give him any returns, she said. —*PTI*

HOMEBUYERS FEEL BUDGET'S HARD PINCH

Meanwhile, real estate developers laud Budget

Apartment Owners Associations in Noida and Greater Noida in the national capital region believe revoking indexation benefits in property deals will be a big setback for homebuyers PHOTO: ANI

NOIDA, 24 JULY

The Union Budget 2024-25 has left homebuyers disappointed, as it did not address concerns like high interest rates on home loans and the annual increase in stamp duty charges. Meanwhile, real estate developers lauded the Budget.

Apartment Owners Associations in Noida and Greater Noida in the national capital region believe revoking indexation benefits in property deals will be a big setback for homebuyers.

Noida along with Greater Noida adjoining Delhi in the national capital region has thousands of distressed homebuyers and stuck housing projects.

Rajiva Singh, president of Noida Federation of Apartment Owners Association (NOFAA) believed the Budget revoking indexation benefits in property deals, will be a big setback for homebuyers.

"Apartment owners selling their property will no longer be able to adjust their purchase price using inflation. This new policy will significantly reduce their capital gains. Increase in this tax burden and will make it less attractive for real estate investors," Singh told PTI.

Meanwhile, real estate developers lauded the budget.

"The Modi government is emphasising more on infrastructure. Jewar airport is playing a crucial role to boost the economy in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. Since the Jewar airport is developed along Yamuna Expressway it is going to be a game changer," Ace Group CMD Ajay Chaudhary said.

Ashish Bhutani, CEO of Bhutani Group, said the PM Awas Yojana 2.0, which aims to provide homes for 10 million families, will make home-buying more accessible for low- and middle-income families.

"Lower stamp duties make purchasing property more affordable for women, potentially leading to a rise in the number of female homeowners. The government's proposal for a transit-oriented development plan for 14 large cities and the significant investment to address housing needs for the urban poor and middle-class families is also appreciated," he added.

Noida's industry stakeholders in apparel, green energy and MSMEs besides local market associations also lauded the budget. The twin cities in western Uttar Pradesh are also home to a large number of industries and MSMEs.

Sushil Kumar Jain, President of Noida's Sector 18 Market Association, said although traders did not get any direct tax benefits, the direct benefit of the expenditure on development will go to the traders and entrepreneurs. —*PTI*

COURT AT WORK

Form independent panel for farmer talks: SC to govt

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

Observing that there is a trust deficit between farmers and the government, Supreme Court on Wednesday proposed constitution of an independent committee comprising eminent people to reach out to the protesters to find a solution to their demands.

A three-judge bench headed by Justice Surya Kant said there is a need for a "neutral umpire" who can inspire confidence between farmers and the government.

"You have to take some steps to reach out to farmers. Why would they otherwise want to come to Delhi? You are sending Ministers from here and despite their best intentions there is trust deficit," the bench also comprising justices Dipankar Datta and Ujjal Bhuyan said.

"Let appropriate instructions be taken within a week. Till then let parties maintain status quo at the site to prevent flaring up of the situation at the Shambhu border," the bench said.

The top court was hearing the Haryana government's plea challenging the high court order asking it to remove within a week the barricades at the Shambhu border near Ambala where farmers have been camping since 13 February. —*PTI*

SC REFUSES TO BRING TRIBUNALS UNDER E-COURTS PROJECT

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to entertain a plea seeking to include tribunals in the e-courts project aimed at upgrading the digital infrastructure of courts across the country. The PIL said quasi-judicial panels like the Armed Forces Tribunal and the National Green Tribunal should be made part of the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG). The NJDG falls under the e-courts project that pertains to the formulation of a national policy on the computerisation of the country's judiciary. —*PT*

SC seeks plan on Haldwani rehabilitation

Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Uttarakhand chief secretary to hold a meeting with the Centre and railways to rehabilitate over 50,000 people, majorly Muslims, who have encroached on railway land in Haldwani. It observed that encroachers are also humans

—*PTI*

SC to examine right to be forgotten of acquitted accused

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

The Supreme Court agreed on Wednesday to examine an issue related to the right to be forgotten of an accused who seeks removal of judgments containing names from the public domain, saying this will have "serious ramifications".A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud also stayed a judgment of the Madras High Court that had asked a law portal to remove from its website a verdict that had acquitted a man in a rape case. —*PTI*

HC quashes DRI summons issued to Hero Chairman

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

PHOTO: PTI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday quashed a summons issued to Hero Motocorp chairman Pawan Kant Munjal in a case registered by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) relating to foreign currency.

High Court passed the order on Munjal's plea seeking quashing and setting aside of a trial court's 1 July, 2023, order by which the summons was issued against him for alleged offences under the Customs Act. In November last year, the High Court had stayed the proceedings relating to foreign currency lodged against Munjal by the DRI.

The High Court, in its interim order, had noted that Munjal was exonerated by the Customs, Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal (CESTAT) on the same set of facts and this was not disclosed before the trial court and that the petitioner had successfully made out a case for interim protection.

The DRI had filed a prosecution complaint in 2022 for "carrying, attempting to export and illicit export of prohibited items, that is, foreign currency" against Munjal, a third-party service provider company called SEMPL and individuals Amit Bali, Hemant Dahiya, KR Raman and some others.

Enforcement Directorate (ED) had also registered a case under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. The ED has alleged that Salt Experience and Management Private Limited "illegally exported foreign currency equivalent to about Rs 54 crore to various countries during the period from 2014-2015 to 2018-2019, which was ultimately used for personal expenses of Munjal". —*PTI*

'ENCROACHMENT ASTONISHING'

HC cracks down on pollution, encroachment of Kerala's lake

KOCHI, 24 JULY

Kerala High Court has directed the Kollam Corporation to take strict measures to prevent discharge of waste and other effluents into the Ashtamudi Lake, a Ramsar site, which has been described as the gateway to the state's backwaters.

The court also directed the Sub Collector of Kollam to initiate proceedings to remove encroachers from around the lake. A bench of Acting Chief Justice A Muhamed Mustaque and Justice S Manu was "astonished" that a large extent of land around the lake has been encroached.

"It is high time that we need to secure this 'kayal poramboke' for future generations and also ensure free flow of water in the Ashtamudi lake," it said. The observation and directions of the court came on a plea by a lawyer alleging that the corporation was permitting discharge of effluents into the lake.

Ashtamudi Lake, a Ramsar site, which has been described as the gateway to the state's backwaters PHOTO: PTI

After considering the contentions raised by the petitioner, advocate Boris Paul, the bench directed the secretary of the Kollam Corporation and the secretaries of other local authorities to place before the court details of the action taken to prevent discharge of waste into the lake.

Ashtamudi Lake is a wetland site of international importance under the Ramsar Convention which is also known as the 'Convention of Wetlands'.

The lake spread over an area of around 1,700 sq km and surrounded by swaying coconut groves and palm trees and spotted by several small islands, is preferred by tourists from around the world for houseboat rides. —*PTI*

SHO shunted, 3 cops fired in molestation case of 3 UP girls

BAHRAICH, 24 JULY

A Station House Officer of the Nanpara police station was shunted out and three policemen, including a Sub-Inspector (SI), were suspended following a case of molestation of three Dalit girls, police said on Wednesday.

The incident occurred on Sunday last week when three Dalit girls had gone to a weekly market and were allegedly molested by some men, the police said.

Salman and Aslam, who run a meat shop in the market, allegedly molested the girls. When the girls and the brother of one of them protested, the duo attacked them, the police said. Superintendent of Police Vrinda Shukla said the accused had attacked the other side with knives kept in a meat shop, due to which some people were injured. Shukla said that on the charge of negligence in this case, SHO Rakesh Kumar Singh was sent to the lines while the inspector Ashok Kumar and two constables were suspended. —*PTI*

DENIES QUASHING CASE

Ignorance of law no excuse to break it: HC to firm head

MUMBAI, 24 JULY

Ignorance of law is no excuse for breaking it, Bombay High Court has said while refusing to quash a case against the director of a pharmaceutical firm. He was accused of allegedly exporting a chemical declared as a contraband substance without the requisite certificate mandated in law.

Law enforcement machinery shall come to a grinding halt if ignorance is accepted as a defence, it said on Monday.

Ajay Melwani, director of Vivalavita Pharmaceuticals, sought quashing of a 2019 FIR lodged against him under provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act by the anti-drug department of the city police's crime branch.

In his plea, the accused claimed that the 2018 government notification including the chemical under the list of contraband substance was not publicised and hence his firm was not aware that a no objection certificate (NOC) was required before its export.

The bench, however, extended for four weeks a March 2023 order passed by the High Court restraining the investigating agency from filing its chargesheet against Melwani.

If ignorance was an excuse, every person who is charged for any offence or involved in a crime would merely claim that he was unaware of the law in question in order to avoid liability, even though he was well aware of the consequences of breaking the law, it added.

The bench extended for four weeks a March 2023 order restraining the investigating agency from filing its chargesheet PHOTO: PTI

- Ignorance of law is no excuse for breaking it, Bombay High Court has said while refusing to quash a case against the director of a pharmaceutical firm.

The bench noted that the petitioner's company, which engaged in the business of export-import of pharmaceutical products and allied substances, cannot be believed to be ignorant of the rules and regulations governing the said business.

The prosecution case is that one Sam Fine O Chem Ltd., a company engaged in the manufacture of chemicals, had exported 1,000 kg of a controlled substance, N-Phenethyl-4 Piperidone, to a Italian company through Melwani's firm Vivalavita without the mandatory NOC. —*PTI*

MP GOVT REFUSES RTI INFORMATION ON PROJECT CHEETAH

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

The Madhya Pradesh forest department has refused to provide information under the Right to Information Act on management of cheetahs brought from Africa and their cubs born in India.

In response to a request filed by wildlife activist Ajay Dubey, the department cited Section 8(1)(a) of the RTI Act, which allows a public authority to withhold information if its disclosure would prejudicially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security, strategic, scientific, or economic interests of the State, relations with a foreign State, or lead to the incitement of an offence.

Dubey had requested the state forest department to provide "management correspondence records of the Cheetah Project in Kuno and Mandsaur".

Dubey said this is the first time that information on Project Cheetah has been denied under RTI Act since the launch of the programme with the release of eight Namibian cheetahs into Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park on 17 September, 2022.

Dubey had previously received information under RTI on the health of the first cheetah cub born on Indian terrain. —*PTI*

No wrongdoing in Khedkar's disability certificate: Hospital

PUNE, 24 JULY

A civic hospital near Pune, which had issued a seven per cent locomotor disability certificate to IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, has found in its internal probe that the document was as per the rules and there was no wrongdoing in its issuance, a senior official said on Wednesday.

The Yashwantrao Chavan Memorial (YCM) Hospital, run by the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) near Pune city, had issued the certificate to Khedkar in August 2022.

Khedkar faces an allegation of using fraudulent means, including allegedly manipulating the physical disability and Other Backward Classes (OBC) quotas to clear the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) examination. The authenticity of various certificates submitted by her to the UPSC is being probed.

She applied for disability certification about her left limb knee joint back in 2022. She visited here for medical examinations and was assessed by multiple departments. The certificate, issued on 24 August, 2022, stated that she had seven per cent disability in the knee, officials earlier said.

Khedkar had earlier submitted two certificates, provided by the Ahmednagar District Civil Hospital in 2018 and 2021 for visual impairment and mental illness respectively, to the UPSC under the Persons with Benchmark Disabilities (PwBD) category.

The 2023-batch IAS officer, who was a probationary assistant collector at the Pune district collectorate, was transferred to Washim from Pune earlier this month amid allegations that she misrepresented herself under the physical disabilities category. —*PTI*

Puja Khedkar was a probationary assistant collector at the Pune district collectorate PHOTO: PTI

AI FASHION WALK

Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, shared an AI-generated video on the social media platform X. The video showcases an imaginative portrayal of political and world leaders as fashion models, in a runway with eye-catching outfits. The video, posted on Twitter, depicted US President Joe Biden, former US President Donald Trump, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and several others, all dressed in imaginative, futuristic attire. Elon Musk captioned the video with a witty remark: 'High time for an AI fashion show.'

PHOTO: x/@ELONMUSK

Surge in attacks brings fear to calmer parts of J&K

On 9 June, Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir saw one of its deadliest attacks in years.

Nine Hindu pilgrims were killed and more than 30 people were injured after militants opened fire on a bus that was making its way to a shrine in the region.

The firing that took place in Reasi - one of 10 districts in Jammu - is among numerous attacks on the army and civilians in the region in recent months.

Violence is not new to the scenic region, but a recent trend has worried experts - the centre of militant activity seems to be shifting from Kashmir Valley to the relatively less-affected Jammu area.

The Himalayan region of Kashmir has long been a flashpoint between India and Pakistan. Since 1947, the nuclear-armed neighbours have fought two wars and a limited conflict over the Muslim-majority territory, which both claim but only partly control.

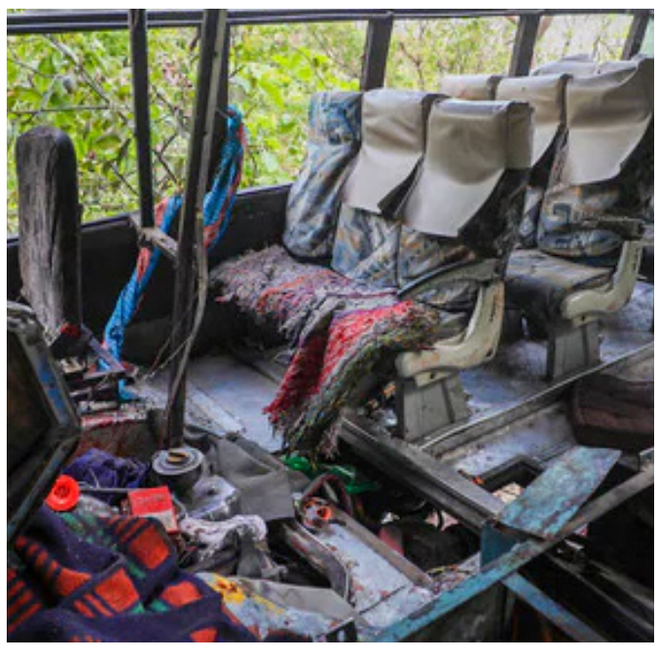
An armed insurgency against Delhi's rule in the Indian-administered region since 1989 has claimed thousands of lives.

The Indian government says that violence has reduced since 2019, when it revoked a constitutional provision that gave the region special autonomy.

But there seems to be a sharp uptick in violence in recent months, particularly in Jammu, stoking fears of militancy returning to that region.

Since 2021, there have been 33 militant-related attacks in Jammu, according to official data. In 2024 alone, the region has seen eight attacks, in which 11 soldiers have been killed and 18 injured. Civilian deaths in Jammu in the first six months of this year were 12, the same number as the whole of 2023.

The attacks occurred in Rajouri, Poonch, Doda, Kathua, Udhampur, Reasi and other areas of the Jammu division. Like the Kashmir valley, Jammu too is near the Line of Control, the de facto border with Pakistan. Delhi has accused Islamabad of supplying militants with weapons, drugs, and money via drones. Pakistan has not officially responded to these allegations.



Damaged inside of the bus carrying pilgrims that was ambushed by terrorists, in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir, on 10 June ***PHOTO: PTI***

Experts say the recent spate of attacks in Jammu suggests that militant activity has spread deeper into the federal territory.

One reason, some say, could be the high concentration of security forces and intelligence activity in the valley, which may have forced militants to move southwards. Others think it is a deliberate attempt to divert the army's attention from other strategic areas in Jammu and Kashmir

Since the insurgency began, the valley has been the epicentre of the conflict. Militancy had spilled over into Jammu in the late 1990s, but the region has been relatively calm since 2002.

So, the rise in militant activity in Jammu since 2021 (two years after India scrapped the region's special status) and the back-to-back strikes in the past few months have deeply unsettled the entire security apparatus in Jammu and Kashmir.

Reports indicate that militants, armed with sophisticated assault rifles and well-trained in jungle warfare, have been using the forests and treacherous terrain of Jammu to hide from the security forces.

The attacks took place in areas of the Jammu province where the terrain is tough and road connectivity is poor, making it hard for security forces to reach the spot on time.

Retired Colonel Bhuwanesh Thapa, father of a soldier who was killed in Doda last week, told reporters that his son had called him before leaving for the search operation and that his team had been preparing to undertake a six to seven-hour trek to reach the location.

Shesh Paul Vaid, a former police chief who had been involved in anti-insurgency operations in the valley, believes that the spike in militant attacks in Jammu is a ploy to "divert attention" from Kashmir.

He also attributes the spurt in violence to a "well-thought-out policy" by China and Pakistan to stretch out India's armed forces.

Like Pakistan, China too shares a disputed border with India in the Himalayan region. Known as the Line of Actual Control (LAC), it falls close to Ladakh, a mountainous territory to the east of Jammu and Kashmir.

According to reports, India's stand-off with China in the Ladakh region since 2020 has compelled it to send additional troops to the cold desert. These forces were reportedly pulled out from Jammu, leaving the region vulnerable to militant activities.

For long, India's strategic community has feared the prospect of a two-front war along its northern and western borders. Experts believe that any military collusion between Pakistan and China will stretch India's defences.

"The thinning of troops [in Jammu] is making an impact. The militants are taking advantage of it," said Lt Gen Deependra Singh Hooda, a former military commander.

Lt Col Suneel Bartwal, an army spokesperson in Jammu, told the BBC that the army had been conducting a series of "joint and co-ordinated operations" with police to eliminate "foreign terrorists". He added that a number of measures had been taken to enhance synergy between various security agencies in the region.

Some experts also point out that India's intelligence network in Jammu is less developed than in Kashmir due to its relative calm and fewer incidents of violence since 2002.

Political analyst Zafar Choudhary says for the past three decades, counter-insurgency specialists have been stationed in Kashmir and not in Jammu.

"They [forces] have understood the terrain and topography of the Kashmir valley over the years, [but] not much of Jammu," he says.

—BBC News

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

This tiny TN village claims Kamala as its own

Thulasendhrapuram, a tiny village around 300km from the south Indian city of Chennai (formerly Madras) and 14,000 km from Washington DC, is where Kamala Harris' maternal grandparents were from.

The centre of the village is currently proudly diplaying a large banner of Harris, 59.

Special prayers are being offered to the local deity for her success - Harris and her maternal grandfather's names are on the list of donors to the village temple - and sweets are being distributed.

Villagers have been closely observing the US presidential race following Joe Biden's withdrawal and Ms Harris' rise as the possible nominee.

"It is not an easy feat to be where she has reached in the most powerful country in the world," says Krishnamurthi, a retired bank manager.

"We are really proud of her. Once Indians were ruled by foreigners, now Indians are leading powerful nations."

There is also a sense of pride, especially among women. They see Ms Harris as one of their own, a symbol of what is possible for women everywhere.

"Everybody knows her, even the children. 'My sister, my mother' - that is how they address her," said Arulmozhi Sudhakar, a village local body representative.

"We are happy that she has not forgotten her roots and we express our happiness."

The excitement and spectacle is a reminder of how villagers took to the streets with fireworks, posters and calendars when Harris became the vice president.

There was a communal feast where hundreds enjoyed traditional south Indian dishes like sambar and idli, which according to one of Ms Harris' relatives, are among her favourite foods to eat.

Harris is the daughter of Shyamala Gopalan, a breast cancer researcher, who hailed from the southern state of Tamil Nadu, before moving to the US in 1958. Gopalan's parents were from Thulasendhrapuram.

"My mother, Shyamala, came to the US from India alone at 19. She was a force – a scientist, a civil rights activist, and a mother who infused a sense of pride in her two daughters," Harris said in a social media post last year.

Harris visited Chennai with her sister Maya after their mother died, and immersed her ashes in the sea according to Hindu traditions, according to this report in The Hindu newspaper .

Harris comes from a family of high achievers. Her maternal uncle Gopalan Balachandran is an academic. He grandfather PV Gopalan, rose to become an Indian bureaucrat, and was an expert on refugee resettlement.

He also served as an advisor to Zambia's first president in the 1960s.

"She (Kamala) has been a prominent figure for quite a while now. It's not a great surprise. Something like this was on the cards for many years," said R Rajaraman, an emeritus professor of theoretical physics at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University and a classmate of Ms Harris' mother.

Prof Rajaraman says he lost touch with Shyamala but met her again in the mid 1970s when he travelled to the US and met Gopalan in Berkeley.

"Shyamala was there. She gave me a cup of tea. These two children (Kamala and her sister Maya) were there. They paid no attention," he recalled.

"Both of them were enterprising. There was positivity in her mother, which is there in Kamala also."

Back in Thulasenhrapuram, villagers are anticipating the announcement of her candidature soon.

"Kamala's chithi (mother's younger sister) Sarala visits this temple regularly. In 2014 she donated 5,000 rupees ($60; £46) on behalf of Kamala Harris," said Natarajan, the temple priest.

Natarajan is confident that their prayers will help Ms Harris win the election.

The villagers say they might be thousands of miles away from the US, but they feel connected with her journey. They hope she would visit them some day or the village would find a mention in her speech.

—BBC News

A banner of Kamala Harris in Thulasendhrapuram village, Tamil Nadu ***PHOTO: BBC NEWS***

21 July was world's hottest day in 84 years: EU climate agency

With global average temperatures already at near-record levels, a new daily average temperature record was not completely unexpected ***PHOTO: PTI***

The Earth experienced its hottest day in at least 84 years, with the global average temperature reaching a record high of 17.09 degrees Celsius on 21 July, according to the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S).

This follows a series of monthly heat records -- June marked the 12th consecutive month of global temperatures reaching or exceeding the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold. Every month since June last year has been the warmest on record.

Preliminary data from C3S showed that 21 July was the hottest day since at least 1940, surpassing the previous record of 17.08 degrees Celsius set on July 6, 2023.

What stands out is the significant difference between the temperatures since July 2023 and all previous years.

Before July 2023, the Earth's daily average temperature record, set in August 2016, was 16.8 degrees Celsius. However, since July 3, 2023, there have been 57 days with temperatures exceeding that previous record.

Carlo Buontempo, director of C3S, said the difference between the temperatures over the past 13 months and previous records is staggering.

"We are now in truly uncharted territory and as the climate continues to warm, we are bound to see new records in the coming months and years," he said.

Analysis shows that 2023 and 2024 have seen significantly higher annual maximum daily global temperatures compared to previous years.

The 10 years with the highest daily average temperatures are from 2015 to 2024.

The global average temperature usually peaks between late June and early August, driven by the northern hemisphere's summer.

The land masses in the northern hemisphere warm up faster than the southern hemisphere's oceans can cool down.

With global average temperatures already at near-record levels, a new daily average temperature record was not completely unexpected.

C3S scientists attributed the sudden rise in daily global temperatures to much higher-than-average temperatures over large parts of Antarctica. Such large anomalies are not uncommon during the Antarctic winter and also contributed to record global temperatures in early July 2023.

- The Earth's global surface temperature has already increased by around 1.2 degrees Celsius due to the rapidly-increasing concentration of greenhouse gases, primarily carbon dioxide and methane, in the atmosphere

The Antarctic Sea ice extent is almost as low as it was last year, leading to above-average temperatures over parts of the Southern Ocean.

As the global average temperature typically peaks between late June and early August, scientists expect it to rise and peak around 22 or 23 July, 2024, before decreasing.

The European climate agency said whether 2024 will be the warmest year ever depends largely on the development and intensity of La Niña.

While 2024 has been warm enough to surpass 2023, the exceptional warmth of the last four months of 2023 makes it too early to predict with certainty which year will be warmer.

Climate science non-profit Berkeley Earth estimated last week that 2024 has a 92 per cent chance of setting a new annual heat record.

There is a 99 per cent chance that 2024 will have an annual average temperature anomaly of more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above the 1850-1900 average, it said.

At the 2015 UN climate talks in Paris, world leaders committed to limiting the global average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial period average to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

However, a permanent breach of the 1.5-degree Celsius limit specified in the Paris Agreement refers to long-term warming over a 20 or 30-year period.

The Earth's global surface temperature has already increased by around 1.2 degrees Celsius due to the rapidly-increasing concentration of greenhouse gases, primarily carbon dioxide and methane, in the atmosphere.

This warming is considered to be the reason behind record droughts, wildfires and floods worldwide.

—PTI

PHOTO: NEWSX

Pak's PTI holds strike demanding Imran's release

ISLAMABAD, 24 JULY

Straddled with woes, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on Tuesday staged a hunger strike outside the Parliament House in Islamabad with a demand of immediate release of the party leader Imran Khan and other incarcerated party members, Pakistan-based Geo news reported.

Party chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said that the strike will be observed daily till 8pm against the "injustice" against the party and its leaders, Geo News reported. A day after the Information Secretary of PTI, Raoof Hasan was arrested alongside other party workers, the party's central secretariat was sealed on Wednesday over "lack of fire and life safety arrangements", Geo news reported. *—ANI*

Man arrested after British soldier was stabbed

LONDON, 24 JULY

A 24-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder after a soldier was stabbed and seriously injured in a street near a barracks in southeast England, police said Wednesday. The British Army said the victim, who is in his 40s, suffered serious injuries. He was airlifted to a hospital for treatment. There was no immediate word on a motive. Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he was "shocked and appalled," writing on social network X. "All our thoughts are with the soldier, his family and our Armed Forces community, who serve to keep all of us safe. I wish him a swift recovery." Defence Secretary John Healey also called the attack "shocking." The Kent Police force said officers were called Tuesday evening to reports of an assault in the town of Gillingham. *—AP*

Taiwan prepares for strong typhoon that killed 13

TAIPEI, 24 JULY

Taiwan shuttered offices, schools and tourist sites across the island on Wednesday ahead of a powerful typhoon that already worsened seasonal rains in the Philippines, killed at least 13 people and displaced 6,00,000. Typhoon Gaemi's outer skirt was bringing heavy rain to much of Taiwan, where a direct landfall was expected Wednesday evening in the northern county of Ylan. Fishing boats were recalled to port amid turbulent seas, while air travellers were rushing to board overseas flights before the storm arrives, amid numerous cancellations. On Wednesday morning, the typhoon was east of Taiwan moving at 18 kilometres per hour with maximum sustained wind speeds of 183 kilometres per hour, the Central Weather Administration said. *—AP*

Turkey to regulate large stray dog population

ANKARA, 24 JULY

A Turkish parliamentary commission has approved a bill aimed at regulating the country's large stray dog population, a move that has raised concerns among animal rights advocates who fear many of the dogs would be killed or end up in neglected and overcrowded shelters. The 17-article bill, approved late Tuesday, has sparked a conflict between animal rights groups and advocates for safer streets free of feral dogs. It is now set to be submitted to the full assembly for a final vote. It is unclear, however, if it will be addressed before the parliament breaks for its summer recess. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose ruling party proposed the bill, estimates that around 4 million stray dogs roam Turkiye's streets and rural areas. Although many of these dogs are harmless. *—AP*

Nepal plane crash: 18 dead, pilot survives

The plane was bound for Pokhra for regular maintenance service when the accident occurred

KATHMANDU, 24 JULY

A private Nepalese airline plane crashed during takeoff and caught fire at the Tribhuvan International Airport here on Wednesday, killing 18 people aboard, including a foreigner, while the pilot survived with major injuries.

The Nepalese domestic plane N9AME, belonging to Saurya Airlines, was bound for Pokhra for regular maintenance service when the accident occurred at 11.11 am.

The Bombardier CRJ-200 aircraft "suffered a runway excursion and burst into massive flames immediately", the Search and Rescue Centre of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal said in a statement.

Videos posted online showed the plane being enveloped in fire and smoke. Fire engines and ambulances were rushed to the spot after the incident.

The deceased were identified as co-pilot S Katuwal and 17 employees of the Saurya Airlines, including a Nepali female and a Yemeni national.

The wreckage of a plane crash as rescue operations are underway at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu, Nepal, on Wednesady *PHOTO: PTI*

Pilot captain Manish Shakya, 37, is undergoing treatment at Kathmandu Model Hospital.

Of the deceased, 15 died on the spot while three died during treatment at a local hospital, authorities said.

Following the accident, services at the Kathmandu airport were halted briefly before being resumed, the airport authorities said.

- Saruya Airlines operates flights to five tourist destinations within Nepal, with a fleet of three Bombardier CRJ-200 jets, according to the company's website

Saruya Airlines operates flights to five tourist destinations within Nepal, with a fleet of three Bombardier CRJ-200 jets, according to the company's website.

Nepal has been criticised for its poor air safety record in recent years but the reasons also include partly sudden weather changes and partly airstrips located in hard-to-access rocky terrains apart from human error.

According to Nepal's civil aviation body, 914 people have died in air crashes in the country since the first disaster was recorded in August 1955.

In January last year, all 72 people on board, including five Indians, were killed when a Yeti Airlines aircraft crashed in the resort city of Pokhara. The crash was attributed to a human error.

Yeti Airlines' 9N-ANC ATR-72 aircraft crashed on the bank of the Seti River between the old airport and the new airport minutes before landing on January 15, 2023, which was the 104th crash in Nepali skies and third biggest in terms of casualties.

The only incidents in which more people were killed took place in July and September 1992. Those crashes involved aircraft of Thai Airways and Pakistan International Airlines and left 113 and 167 people dead, respectively.

—PTI

Search operations continued in several areas even after heavy rainfall, according to local authorities *PHOTO: PTI*

At least 229 killed in Ethiopia landslides

ADDIS ABABA, 24 JULY

Mudslides triggered by heavy rain in a remote part of Ethiopia have killed at least 229 people, including many who tried to rescue survivors, local authorities said Tuesday, in what the prime minister called a "terrible loss."

Young children and pregnant women were among the victims in Kencho Shacha Gozdi district of southern Ethiopia, said Dagmawi Ayele, a local administrator, adding that at least five people have been pulled out alive.

The death toll rose sharply from the initial one of 55 late Monday. Search operations continued in the area, said Kassahun Abayneh, head of the communications office in Gofa Zone, the administrative area where the mudslides occurred.

Ethiopia's ruling party in a statement said it felt sorrow over the disaster.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said in a statement on Facebook that he was "deeply saddened by this terrible loss."

The federal disaster prevention task force has been deployed to assist in search and rescue efforts, Abiy's statement said.

It was not immediately clear how many people were still unaccounted for. Many victims were buried on Monday as rescue workers searched the steep terrain for survivors of another mudslide the previous day.

Markos Melese, director of the disaster response agency in Gofa Zone, said many rescuers remained missing. *—AP*

Harris attacks Trump over 'fear, hate'

WSHIGNTON, 24 JULY

US Vice-President Kamala Harris has gone on the offensive against Donald Trump in the first rally of her White House campaign, portraying November's election as a choice between a former prosecutor and a convicted felon.

Speaking to a crowd of about 3,000 in the battleground state of Wisconsin, Harris likened her Republican opponent to fraudsters she said she had prosecuted.

Trump, meanwhile, assailed her record on the border, and posted on social media: "Lyin' Kamala Harris destroys everything she touches!" It comes a day after she secured the support of a majority of Democratic delegates, paving the way for her to become the party's nominee.

Vice President Kamala Harris speaks from the South Lawn of the White House in Washington on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

On Sunday afternoon, President Joe Biden announced he was withdrawing from the race and endorsed his vice-president amid mounting pressure from top Democrats and donors following his disastrous debate against Trump in late June.

The fledgling Harris campaign raised a staggering $100m plus in the 36 hours after Biden's exit.

Adding to her momentum, a new national poll from Reuters and Ipsos shows her with a two-point lead over Trump, 44 per cent to 42 per cent. *—BBC News*

FBI chief to face questions over Trump assassination attempt

WASHINGTON, 24 JULY

FBI Director Christopher Wray is set to testify Wednesday about the bureau's investigation into the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump, with lawmakers at a congressional hearing likely to press him for fresh details about the gunman's motive and background. The hearing before the House Judiciary Committee will represent Wray's most detailed comments to date about a shooting. *—AP*

Trump campaign files complaint to block Biden's fund

WASHINGTON, 24 JULY

The Trump campaign has filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission arguing that money raised for US President Joe Biden's 2024 reelection bid could not be transferred to Vice President Kamala Harris' presidential campaign.

The complaint was filed on Tuesday by the Trump campaign's general counsel David Warrington and argues that transferring the funds to Harris's presidential campaign would amount to "flagrantly violating" the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971.

On Sunday, President Biden announced that he was withdrawing from the race for the White House on 5 November and endorsed Harris amid mounting pressure from top Democrats and donors following his disastrous presidential debate against Trump in late June. *—PTI*

121 killed in one of 'bloodiest' attack in Gaza

About 1,50,000 Khan Younis residents were forced to flee *PHOTO: PTI*

KHAN YOUNIS, 24 JULY

At least 121 Palestinians killed and hundreds wounded in Khan Younis since Israel launched its offensive. Nearly 90 people were killed in "one of the bloodiest" Israeli attacks on Wednesday. Israeli forces are facing fierce resistance from Palestinian fighters. About 1,50,000 Khan Younis residents were forced to flee in one day, with residents saying they barely got a couple of minutes to escape to areas with little or no infrastructure. In a separate incident, Egypt is privately moving towards allowing Israeli soldiers to remain in a corridor that runs along its border with the Gaza Strip despite public declarations against it, The Times of Israel reports quoting a senior Israeli official and a second official familiar with the matter. *—Courtesy, Al Jazeera*

GERMANY BANS GROUP ACCUSED OF IRAN LINKS, HEZBOLLAH SUPPORT

BERLIN, 24 JULY

The German government on Wednesday banned a Hamburg-based organisation accused of promoting the Iranian leadership's ideology and supporting Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, as police raided 53 properties around the country.

The ban on the Islamic Centre Hamburg, or IZH, and its various sub-organisations elsewhere in Germany followed searches in November. Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said material gathered in the investigation "confirmed the serious suspicions to such a degree that we ordered the ban today."

The IZH "promotes an Islamist-extremist, totalitarian ideology in Germany," while it and its sub-organisations "also support the terrorists of Hezbollah and spread aggressive antisemitism," Faeser said in a statement.

Her ministry alleged that "as the direct representative of Iran's Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution," the IZH disseminates "the ideology of the Islamic Revolution in an aggressive and militant way and seeks to bring about such a revolution in the Federal Republic of Germany."

The Interior Ministry said that because of the ban, four Shiite mosques in Germany will be closed. The IZH's assets are also being confiscated. *—AP*

Ukraine's FM Kuleba seeks 'common ground' with China

BEIJING, 24 JULY

Dmytro Kuleba *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

Ukraine's foreign minister said Wednesday that he is seeking "common ground" in talks with his Chinese counterpart on ending his country's war with Russia.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, now in its third year, has strained relations between the two countries.

Video released by Ukraine's Foreign Ministry showed Dmytro Kuleba arriving at the meeting venue in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou and exchanging remarks with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi. It is the first visit by a Ukrainian foreign minister since the war started in 2022.

Wang said that China attaches great importance to its relations with Ukraine. Noting the growth in trade between the two countries, he said that their relations have continued to develop normally "despite complex and ever-changing international and regional situations."

China did not participate in a peace conference in Switzerland last month that did not include Russia. In a video posted on social media, Kuleba said he would have extensive and detailed negotiations to look for common ground in the pursuit of peace in Ukraine. *—AP*

Trash balloons land near S Korean President's office

SEOUL, 24 JULY

PHOTO: X/SCREEGRAB

Trash from at least one North Korean balloon fell on the South Korean presidential compound Wednesday, raising worries about the security of key South Korean facilities from North Korean provocations.

The rubbish that fell on the ground at the compound in central Seoul contained no dangerous material and no one was hurt, South Korea's presidential security service said in a statement. But experts say South Korea needs to shoot incoming North Korean balloons at border areas next time, as it's not clear whether North Korea would put in hazardous items in future campaigns.

North Korea's latest balloon launches came days after South Korea boosted its frontline broadcasts of K-pop songs and propaganda messages across the rivals' heavily armed border. Their tit-for-tat Cold War-style campaigns are inflaming tensions, with the rivals threatening stronger steps and warning of grave consequences.

Seoul officials earlier said North Korea had used the direction of winds to fly balloons toward South Korea, but some of the past balloons had timers that were likely meant to pop the bags of trash midair. *—AP*

AT LEAST 200 KILLED

B'desh crawls back to normalcy after clashes

DHAKA, 24 JULY

Internet and mobile data services are still down in Bangladesh *PHOTO: PTI*

Bangladesh was crawling back to normalcy with limited internet and office hours Wednesday after more than a week of chaos over student protests involving government job quotas. Nearly 200 deaths were reported in just over a week of violence.

Most of the country remained without internet, but thousands of cars were on the streets of the capital after authorities relaxed a curfew for seven hours.

Offices and banks opened for a few hours Wednesday while authorities restored broadband internet in some areas in Dhaka and the second-largest city of Chattogram.

Since July 16, at least 197 people have been killed in violence, the leading Bengali-language Prothom Alo daily reported Wednesday. The Associated Press could not confirm the death toll from any official sources.

Schools and other educational institutions have remained shut until further notice.

Clashes have occurred since July 15 between the police and mainly student protesters demanding an end to a quota that reserved 30% of government jobs for relatives of veterans who fought in Bangladesh's war of independence in 1971.

The chaos became deadly after the country's main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party and right wing Jamaat-e-Islami party extended their support to the protests. While violence spread across the country, many government establishments were also under attack in Dhaka.

On Tuesday, the government issued a circular, accepting a Supreme Court verdict that reformed the quota system for the government jobs.

The protesters took time to respond to Sunday's verdict, and on Tuesday they said that the Supreme Court verdict and the subsequent government circular were in favour of the protesters, but the government should answer for the bloodshed and deaths involving the protests. *—AP*

Gold prices drop by ₹650 to ₹71,650 per 10g

Gold prices dropped by Rs 650 to Rs 71,650 per 10 grams in the local market here on Wednesday, continuing the retreat for the second day in a row due to weak demand from jewellers and import duty cut announced in the budget for 2024-25. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the precious metal had closed at Rs 72,300 per 10 grams in the previous session on Tuesday after taking a hit of Rs 3,350. Silver prices, however, remained flat at Rs 87,500 per kg in the local market. Gold of 99.9 per cent and 99.5 per cent purity slumped by Rs 650 each to Rs 71,650 per 10 grams and Rs 71,300 per 10 grams, respectively. In the past two sessions, gold prices have tanked by Rs 4000 per 10 grams. Silver was also marginally up at USD 29.38 per ounce in New York. *—PTI*

Rupee falls 1 paise to revisit all-time low of 83.70

The rupee depreciated 1 paisa to revisit its all-time closing low of 83.70 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, weighed down by a strong dollar against major crosses overseas amid investors' weak appetite for riskier assets. Forex traders said the increase in capital gains tax and removal of indexation benefits announced in the FY25 Budget on Tuesday was the main reason for dollar buying as foreign investors sold stocks. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.69 and touched an intra-day high of 83.68 and a low of 83.72 against the dollar during the session. It finally settled at an all-time low level of 83.70 (provisional) against the American currency, registering a fall of 1 paisa from its previous close. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading higher by 0.05 per cent at 104.50. *—PTI*

Bajaj Finserv profit rises 10% to ₹2,138 crore

Bajaj Finserv Ltd (BFL) on Wednesday reported 10 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,138 crore for the first quarter ended June 2024. The company had logged a net profit of Rs 1,943 crore in the year-ago period. Total income during the quarter increased to Rs 31,480 crore from Rs 23,280 crore in the year-ago period, BFL said in a regulatory filing. BFL is the holding company for various financial services businesses under the Bajaj group. Total expenditure also rose to Rs 25,514 crore from Rs 18,157 crore in the same quarter a year ago. During the quarter, its subsidiary Bajaj Allianz General Insurance reported 39 per cent jump in profit to Rs 576 crore. Another subsidiary Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance's profit increased to Rs 104 crore from Rs 94 crore in the same quarter a year ago. *—PTI*

Steadview Capital invest Rs 250 cr in Unimech Aerospace

Unimech Aerospace, which manufactures forged components and precision parts for the aerospace industry, on Wednesday said it has raised Rs 250 crore from investors, including Steadview Capital Mauritius Ltd, in private placement financing. The funding round also saw participation from ValueQuest Scale Fund and Evolvence India Fund IV Ltd, the company said in a statement. The funds raised from this investment will bolster the company's expansion efforts and strategic objectives, Anil Puthan, Chairman and Managing Director of Unimech Aerospace, said. Bengaluru-based Unimech Aerospace is in the process of filing draft papers with the Securities and Exchange Board of India for floating an Initial Public Offering. The company has grown to over Rs 200 crore in revenue and 380 employees for FY2023-24, without external funding. *—PTI*

Market falls for 4th day on selling of banking shares

Sensex decline 280.16 pts or 0.35 per cent to settle at 80,148.88

NSE Nifty dropped 65.55 points or 0.27 per cent to 24,413.50 *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

MUMBAI, 24 JULY

Benchmark BSE Sensex declined for the fourth day in a row on Wednesday due to selling in financial and banking shares and the government's move to hike securities transaction tax and short term capital gains tax.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 280.16 points or 0.35 per cent to settle at 80,148.88 with 19 of its components closing lower and 11 with gains. During the day, it tumbled 678.53 points or 0.84 per cent to 79,750.51.

The NSE Nifty dropped 65.55 points or 0.27 per cent to 24,413.50.

From the Sensex pack, Bajaj Finserv declined by 2 per cent after its first-quarter earnings failed to cheer investors.

Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Adani Ports, Axis Bank and State Bank of India were the other big laggards.

However, Tech Mahindra, ITC, NTPC, Tata Motors and Sun Pharma were among the gainers.

Conglomerate ITC surged to 52-week highs before closing higher by 0.42 per cent in its second straight day of gains after the budget proposed no new tax on tobacco products. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,975.31 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 0.75 per cent to USD 81.62 a barrel. *—PTI*

SHRIMP STOCK GAINERS

Apex Frozen Foods 312.07 (+52.01 or 20%)

Avanti Feeds 736.00 (+90.65 or 14.05%)

Waterbase Ltd 101.94 (+16.79 or 19.72%)

Mukka Proteins 54.00 (+4.33 or 8.72%)

Zeal Aqua 15.35 (+1.39 or 9.96%)

About 1.44 lakh startups are recognised by the DPIIT *PHOTO: UNSPLASH*

Angel tax was on investments: DPIIT on removal of levy

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

Removal of the Angel tax for startups was a long pending issue as this levy was on investment coming into the country and such overseas inflows should not be taxed, a top government official said.

Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Rajesh Kumar Singh said the decision will help in attracting foreign investments, promoting innovation and further strengthening the startup ecosystem of the country, which is the third largest in the world.

Angel tax (income tax at the rate of over 30 per cent) refers to the income tax that the government imposes on funding raised by unlisted companies, or startups, if their valuation exceeds the company's fair market value.

The angel tax was forcing startups to approach foreign investors and now after the removal of this clause from the Income tax act, budding entrepreneurs would be able to raise funds.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal also said that the decision will help attract investments in the Indian startups and further promote the growth of budding entrepreneurs.

As on date, about 1.44 lakh startups are recognised by the DPIIT. *—PTI*

ENERGY PLAYERS OPINION

Budget plan for energy to push net-zero goals

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

Budget announcements related to critical minerals and green transition will not only make India self-reliant in resources but also help in meeting net-zero goals, energy industry players said.

In her Budget speech on Tuesday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a slew of measures for sectors including infrastructure, manufacturing, healthcare, education, startups, and green energy, among others.

Amit Rautela, CFO of state-owned Meja Urja Nigam said the Budget has strategically addressed present requirement of thermal power with a focus on Advanced Ultra Super Critical (AUSC) technology through joint venture route. Further, duty related measures for critical minerals will make the country self-reliant in these important resources.

Additionally, the Rs 10,000 crore fund for solar infrastructure development, including solar parks and grid integration, is a pivotal step towards achieving renewable energy targets.

PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana was rolled out earlier this year. In line with the announcement in the interim budget, the scheme has been launched to install rooftop solar plants to enable 1 crore households obtain free electricity up to 300 units every month. *—PTI*

Anand: Pvt firms needs to match govt's efforts

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

India's private sector needs to step up and match the government's efforts towards job creation and making young people employable, as in the absence of a collective effort, the country's demographic dividend could become a demographic disaster, Mahindra Group Chairman Anand Mahindra said.

In his reaction to the Union Budget for 2024-25, he said it shows evidence that the government recognises the importance of growth accompanied by job-creation.

"We are the envy of the world in terms of our growth in GDP. We are the preferred destination of the world for investment because of the belief in our future," Mahindra said.

Mahindra noted that, "Hence for me, the most important element of yesterday's budget was strong evidence that the government recognises this to be its most important mission. And that skilling to make young people employable is as important as employment." Asking the private sector to also play their part, Mahindra said it "needs to step up to the crease and do its part by investing in both employment & employability".

He cautioned that, "If we don't all pull together for this task, the demographic dividend will go back to being a demographic disaster." *—PTI*

No plans to privatise Singareni Collieries: Coal minister Kishan

New Delhi, 24 July

The government has no plans to privatise Singareni Collieries Company in Telangana and efforts will be made to further strengthen it, Coal and Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy said on Wednesday. The coal mining company is jointly owned by the Telangana government and the Union government, and its reserves stretch across 350 kilometres of the Pranahita Godavari Valley of Telangana. Reddy told the Lok Sabha that the government is not planning to privatise any coal mine. The minister also said there are no plans to privatise Singareni Collieries. Singareni Collieries has proven geological reserves aggregating to 8,791 million tonnes. Currently, it is operating 17 opencast and 22 underground mines in six districts of Telangana. *—PTI*

New incentives to taxpayers for filing ITR

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

Union Budget announced on Tuesday has given additional incentives to taxpayers who choose the new tax regime to file their returns. The finance minister says over two-thirds of the taxpayers have chosen the new tax regime in FY23 to file their tax returns.

Under the proposed provisions, if a salaried or a retired taxpayer chooses the new tax regime, he will now get a standard deduction of Rs 75,000 instead of Rs 50,000, which was applicable till last year, on his/her salary or pension income. But for those who opt for the old tax regime the standard deduction will continue to remain at Rs 50,000.

The budget has also tweaked tax slabs and tax rates in favor of taxpayers and pensioners who opt for the new tax regime.

New tax slab will continue to have nil tax up to an income of Rs 3 lakh *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

The new tax slab will continue to have nil tax up to an income of Rs 3 lakh, like the previous year.

But now income between Rs 3-7 lakh will attract a tax rate of 5 per cent, earlier 5 per cent tax was applicable on income of between Rs 3-6 lakhs.

Income of between Rs 7-10 lakh will now be taxed at 10 per cent instead of income between Rs 6-9 lakhs.

Similarly, income of between Rs 10-12 lakh will now be taxed at 15 percent, earlier it was for income between 9-12 lakhs.

Tax on income between 12-15 lakh will continue to remain same at 20 per cent and income above Rs 15 lakh will also remain constant and taxed at a rate of 30 per cent. *—PTI*

OIL BODY SEA UPSET OVER NO HIKE IN BUDGET

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

Edible oil industry body SEA on Wednesday said the government should provide adequate funds for achieving its target to boost domestic production of oilseeds but expressed disappointment that import on cooking oils were not hiked in the Budget.

Reacting to Budget proposal, Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) President Ajay Jhunjhunwala said, "We are a bit disappointed by the fact that no announcement has been made on increasing import duties on edible oils as well as raising duty difference between crude oils and refined oils to a minimum of 15 per cent." *—PTI*

DPIIT to create strict timelines for FDI proposals

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

PHOTO: ANI

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) will formulate strict timelines for different government agencies and departments for clearance of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) proposals from prioritised sectors, a top official said.

DPIIT Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said though there is a standard operating procedure (SOP) for these clearances, still there are delays as the SOPs are not being followed.

The secretary was responding to the Budget announcement that the rules and regulations for FDI and overseas investments will be simplified to facilitate foreign direct investments, and nudge prioritisation.

The Foreign Investment Facilitation Portal (FIFP) was developed after the abolition of the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) in May 2017. The DPIIT, under the ministry, was made the nodal department. FDI proposals are now required to be filed only on the portal which is managed by DPIIT. *—PTI*

Wind power generation at the world's largest 30,000 MW renewable energy at Khavda, Gujarat *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

Adani Green operationalises first 250 MW wind capacity

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

Adani Green Energy on Wednesday said it has operationalised a 250MW wind power generation at the world's largest 30,000 MW renewable energy plant at Khavda, Gujarat.

With this milestone, 2,250 MW of cumulative capacity has been made operational at the Khavda plant, Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) said in a statement.

The operationalisation of 250 MW wind capacity at Khavda further strengthens AGEL's leadership in India with the largest operational portfolio of 11,184 MW. Khavda has one of the best wind resources in India, with speeds of 8 meters per second making it an ideal location to harness wind energy.

The 5.2 MW WTGs installed at Khavda are built with superior German technology and manufactured at Adani New Industries Ltd's (ANIL) integrated manufacturing ecosystem strategically located near the Mundra port.

AGEL has transformed Khavda barren wasteland into a hub of clean and affordable energy. The energy from Khavda plant can power 16.1 million homes. *—PTI*

'Budget schemes to promote job creation for women'

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

Industry experts on Wednesday said the Union Budget's emphasis on skilling, employment, and enhanced women workforce participation will facilitate job creation and overall growth.

Paid internships and the allocation of budget for schemes to boost women's participation in the workforce is

PHOTO: ANI

yet another announcement that is being lauded by the stakeholders.

"I welcome and appreciate the budget allocation of Rs 2 lakh crore package for youth, focussing on jobs, skilling, and education. The provision of Rs 1.48 lakh crore for education, employment, and skills and the increase of 6.8 per cent in overall budget allocation this year was the need of the hour," said Naman Jain, education policy expert, and Vice Chairman at Silverline Prestige School.

To create a robust economic structure in India, the government will also address the motherhood penalty which will enable more women to participate and indulge in the employment sector.

The promotion of market access for women SHG enterprises is also being appreciated. *—PTI*

UPTO $50M SAVINGS

Apple to be most beneficial on import duty cut

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

IPhone maker Apple is believed to be the biggest beneficiary of a 5 per cent reduction in import duty on mobile phones and the move could lead to savings of as much as USD 35 to 50 million for the tech titan, market experts said on Tuesday.

Industry watchers also believe that the latest proposals could result in Rs 2,000-4,000 reduction in prices of some of the premium handsets, including iPhone Pro and Google Pixel, if the companies indeed decide to pass on the benefit of cut in levy to customers.

Apple imports all the high-end iPhone Pro models that it sells in India, while some other companies import their flagship devices for some period in small quantities and then make them locally.

Earlier BCD on mobile phones, chargers and motherboards was 20 per cent.

"For BCD on mobile and charger the 5 per cent saving will be mostly applicable to players which are still importing completely built units (CBU) or populated PCBA or chargers. For example, Apple imports Pro series models and Apple could save almost 5 per cent on the import price which could translate to savings of USD 35-50 million (Rs 250-418 crore) until Apple starts manufacturing the Pro models completely," said Neil Shah, VP for Research, Counterpoint Research *—PTI*

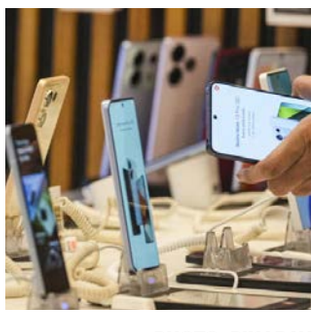


PHOTO: PIXABAY

OLYMPICS 2024

Women boxing their way to parity with men's game

Charley Davison fought for Britain in Tokyo Olympics but lost early

COLORADO, 24 JULY

Charley Davison's husband and their three young children were already in bed back home on the east coast of England before she pulled on her headgear and stepped into the World Boxing ring in southern Colorado earlier this year. The 30-year-old Davison was able to pursue her Olympic dreams half a world away from her family only because of the spectacular growth of women's boxing.

In just over a decade, the sport has proliferated from its Olympic debut with only 36 fighters in three weight classes in London to become an equal part of the tournament in Paris, where half of the 248-fighter field will be women competing in a record six weight classes. The addition of a 54-kilogram bantamweight division at the Paris Olympics changed the game for fighters like Davison.

Charley Davison
PHOTO: @CHARLEY_SIAN_DAVISON

"After the Tokyo Olympics, if there wasn't going to be a 54 (division), I would have hung my gloves up," said Davison, a former youth champion who left boxing for seven years before returning to get in shape after having kids.

"Because 51 (kilos) was getting too hard, and 57, I'm not quite big enough for that one, I feel," she added. "So 54 was a blessing. As soon as I heard that weight, I knew it was for me. Every kilo makes a difference. I know I'm not the only one who's grateful. I think it's ideal for a lot of women to have this many weight classes. It makes such a difference for the sport."

Davison fought for Britain in Tokyo but lost early. Three years later, she has the opportunity to try again only because of the IOC's commitment to the sport's growth. Boxing essentially has reached gender parity along with the rest of the Olympic program, and dozens more women are getting a shot.

"Since I've started, especially on the international level, the level (of women's boxing) has raised incredibly," said Canada's Tammara Thibeault, the middleweight world champion and an Olympic quarterfinalist in Tokyo headed to her second Games. *—PTI*

IOC approves French Alps bid backed by Macron to host the 2030 Olympics

PARIS, 24 JULY

The French Alps was named as the 2030 Winter Games host by the International Olympic Committee on Wednesday, though with conditions attached and signoff required from whoever is the next Prime Minister of France. A deadline of 1Oct. was set by the IOC for the next French Prime Minister to sign a document guaranteeing key promises for the 2030 project. The national assembly elected this month must ratify that document by 1March, IOC president Thomas Bach said.

Thomas Bach
PHOTO:X /@THOMASBACH76

It's a now-or-never for me: Archer Tarundeep Rai

PARIS, 1 JULY

Veteran Indian archer Tarundeep Rai *PHOTO: PTI*

It's a "now-or-never situation for me", says veteran Indian archer Tarundeep Rai as he seeks to win a maiden Olympic medal in his fourth appearance at the Games while also serving as the team's unofficial mentor in Paris.

The 40-year-old Rai has won medals in every championship at the global and continental level but not the Olympics.

He has two silver at the World Championships (2005, 2019), and nine World Cup medals, including three gold, a silver, and a bronze in the Asian Games, and two silver and a bronze in the Asian Championships.

"It's emotional every day. It's the fourth time. It's a now-or-never situation for me, and that's what I tell my teammates too. Maybe someone playing his first or second Olympics should think like it's now or never. You have to put in an effort as if it's going to be your last," Rai told PTI in an interview.

The veteran archer from Sikkim was part of the Indian teams at the 2004 Athens, 2012 London, and 2021 Tokyo Olympics. He exited in the first round in the individual event in Athens and the second round in both 2012 and 2021 editions.

In Tokyo, the men's team, which had Tarundeep Rai in it its ranks, reached the quarterfinals.

"The Olympics is a dream for everyone, and I'm no different. You need an extreme level of preparation for this, and you have to put in a lot of hard work to qualify and win a medal. The color of your sweat sometimes turns red," Rai said ahead of the Paris Games.

"This Olympics, I'm playing with a three-year gap. Positive sign. Many changes. Tokyo, whatever I lacked, the objective is to rectify. Will do my best," said Rai who hails from Namchi in Sikkim.

More or less regular at the Olympics since debuting back in 1988, the Indian archers will be aiming to fetch their maiden medal as they began the country's campaign here on Thursday with the qualification rounds. *—PTI*

Sanath Jayasuriya *PHOTO: X / @SANATH_JAYASURIYA*

Lankans should take advantage, says Jayasuriya

PALLEKELE, 24 JULY

Sri Lanka's interim head coach Sanath Jayasuriya on Wednesday revealed that IPL side Rajasthan Royal's high-performance director Zubin Bharucha has helped his batters prepare for the upcoming T20 series against India where he expects them to take advantage of the recent retirements by stars like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

Rohit, Kohli, and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja retired from the T20 Internationals after India's World Cup triumph last month. The T20 series against Sri Lanka will get underway here on July 27.

Jayasuriya revealed despite some of the Sri Lankan players' involvement in the Lanka Premier League, they have held a six-day camp with Bharucha.

"We just started the sessions just after the LPL. Most of the players are playing the LPL, so they were busy with cricket and what we wanted (for them) was to play cricket as much as possible," he said.

"We got Zubin from Rajasthan Royals and we had about six days of work and also with the other cricketers who finished with the LPL. I hope the players have learned what you (management) wanted to do in terms of practice and their technique.

"The preparation was good, and we have two more days in Kandy before the T20 starts," he added.

Jayasuriya said the sessions with Bharucha were intense and the players have been able to learn a lot from him.

"It is important to learn as international cricketers new techniques, new approaches, and shot-making to be effective," he said.

India also has a new captain Suryakumar Yadav for T20Is and Jayasuriya, while acknowledging the struggles of his side, urged them to make the most of the opportunity.

"Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are the best players in the world. Looking at their talent and the kind of cricket they have played we all know where they belong, along with Jadeja," Jayasuriya was quoted as saying by Associated Press during a press meet. *—PTI*

Tiger Wood's son Charlie misses cut at US Jr Amateur

NEW YORK, 24 JULY

Tiger Woods watched his son, Charlie, shoot a 10-over 80 and miss the cut at 22 over through two rounds at the U.S. Junior Amateur. The 15-year-old Woods, who earned a spot in the 264-player field last month, finished near the bottom of the pack on Tuesday. The top 64 players advance to match play, which begins Wednesday. The 36-hole championship match is on Saturday. Woods did fare better on the Oakland Hills South Course, which Ben Hogan dubbed "The Monster," than he did with an opening 12-over 82 on the North Course. Woods got off to a solid start on Day 2, handling the challenge of teeing off in front of about 500 people standing between him and steel girders that will be part of a new clubhouse.*—PTI*

Root closer to No-1 spot in latest ICC Test Rankings

DUBAI, 24 JULY

England batter Joe Root moved seven points closer to top-ranked batter Kane Williamson in the latest ICC Test Rankings among batters issued on Wednesday. England's dominant performance in the second Test against the West Indies has seen a host of their star players make big gains on the latest ICC Men's Test Player Rankings.Teammate Harry Brook is the big mover up the batter rankings.*—PTI*

Indian men finish sixth, women 7th in WJ Squash

HOUSTON, 24 JULY

India boys finished sixth and the girls seventh in the team events of the World Junior Squash Championships which concluded here on Tuesday. The boys lost to England 1-2 in a match for fifth position, while the girls beat New Zealand 2-1 in the clash for the seventh – both matches going to the decider. Boys: India lost to England 1-2 (Shaurya Bawa bt Yusuf Sheikh 3-11, 11-6, 11-8, 11-7; Yuvraj Wadhwani lost to Bailey Malik 11-5, 9-11, 8-11, 14-16; Ayaan Vazilalli lost to Dylan Roberts 11-6, 9-11, 9-11, 7-11).*—PTI*

Only captains allowed to speak to referees: FIFA

LONDON, 24 JULY

Only captains will be allowed to speak and discuss decisions with the referee during the Olympics, FIFA said on Wednesday following the rule's first implementation at last month's European Championship.

FIFA is encouraging the adoption of the measure by competition organizers globally after UEFA extended the new approach to all of its competitions in a bid to facilitate clearer communication.

"Without referees, there is no football. Protecting match officials and ensuring they are treated with respect is fundamental for the future of the game," FIFA president Gianni Infantino said. "Implementing measures such as 'captain only' is crucial in maintaining the spirit of football and safeguarding those who uphold its laws." The world football governing body added it will continue to monitor the impact of the "captain only" rule.

Gianni Infantino *PHOTO: PTI*

"This is an important step based on the overarching idea of further enhancing fairness and respect in football while enabling an open line of dialogue between the referee and the teams," chairman of the FIFA Referees Committee Pierluigi Collina said.

"As we have seen in the past, measures that are in defence of football end up being accepted." The Olympic football tournament kicks off on Wednesday as Spain takes on Uzbekistan at Paris' Parc des Princes while Argentina faces Morocco in Saint-Etienne. *—PTI*

Ederson's Man City future uncertain, says Guardiola

MANCHESTER CITY, 24 JULY

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola says he cannot be sure Ederson will remain at the club this summer.

The Brazilian goalkeeper has been the subject of interest from the Saudi Pro League. Guardiola said at the end of last season he still regarded Ederson as his first-choice goalkeeper, even though he chose back-up Stefan Ortega for the first-leg of their Champions League quarter-final with Real Madrid. Speaking after his side's 4-3 friendly defeat by Celtic in North Carolina, Guardiola said:

"I'd like him to stay but it depends on other clubs. "I don't know the situation. There have been no contacts in the last days. It's a question of training, being with us until the transfer window finishes and we'll see." *—BBC News*

'ONE GAME AT A TIME'

Deepti reveals the story of India's success

DAMBULLA, 24 JULY

Senior player Deepti Sharma said India's mantra in the Women's T20 Asia Cup has been to take one game at a time as conditions haven't changed from the last time the team played here.

India marched into the semifinals with a thumping 82-run win over Nepal on Tuesday after fireworks with the bat from Shafali Verma (81 off 48 balls) and Deepti's impressive 3/13 with the ball.

India amassed 178 for 3 after batting first and then restricted Nepal to a paltry 98 for 9 in their 20 overs. "From the first game, we are pretty confident about each (match) and every situation and the condition as well. We are looking forward to the semi-final as well," Deepti told the media after the match. She said not much has changed in terms of the nature of the pitches and conditions in Sri Lanka from the team's previous tour to the island nation in June 2022.

"Nothing (has) changed, just keep it very simple and just focus on another match. I played (here) last time also and yeah, nothing changed," she said. "We (are) only backing ourselves and you know, conditions are really (the) same."

Deepti Sharma *PHOTO: PTI*

The right-arm off-spinner is topping the bowling charts with eight wickets in three matches and she credited her success to her readiness to bowl in all situations.

"I (am) always ready to bowl in any kind of situation. I like to take the challenges from the front. (It's) nothing, just (that) I'm enjoying every match, plan accordingly and what we discussed in the meeting, I just apply myself," she said.

"If we win the toss, it's (a) positive (approach) from the upfront. As a batting unit also, we are doing really well from game one and we finished also well," she added. *—PTI*

GLOBAL CHESS LEAGUE SEASON 2

Anand, Carlsen, Hikaru are top players

NEW DELHI, 24 JULY

The Global Chess League announced on Wednesday the list of Icon players for the second season to be held in London from 3 to 12 October at the Friends House.

The league is a joint venture between Tech Mahindra and the International Chess Federation (FIDE).

The stellar line-up of Icon players includes world number one and five-time world champion, Magnus Carlsen, who also featured in the first season of the Global Chess League. In the second season, he will continue to play for Alpine SG Piper, as per a press release from GCL.

To add to the thrilling level of competition, two new Icon players are joining the league for the first time. One of the world's most popular and dynamic players, Hikaru Nakamura, will play for the new team, the American Gambits. Anish Giri will make his debut in the second season with PBG Alaskan Knights as the icon player.

Returning in the Icon player role for Ganges Grandmasters is the five-time world champion, Viswanathan Anand. As the Icon player of the first season's finalists, Mumba Masters, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave will continue to lead from the front for the team. In the second season, Ian Nepomniachtchi will be the Icon player for the Triveni Continental Kings.

Viswanathan Anand and Magnus Carlsen *PHOTO: IANS*

Sameer Pathak, CEO, of Global Chess League, said, "We would like to extend a warm welcome to all the Icon players. With such renowned names at the helm of each team, we are confident that the exciting matches will offer millions of chess fans an incredible experience. In the following weeks, we will be announcing a host of superstar men, women, and prodigy players, which will only add to the excitement ahead of the player draft."

Carlsen, the five-time world champion, said, "The first season in Dubai was a fantastic experience. Chess has been an individual sport, but the concept of a team setting introduced by the Global Chess League is very exciting and refreshing. I look forward to playing again with the Alpine SG Pipers."

Joining as an icon player for the American Gambits, Nakamura, said, "I followed the Global Chess League in its first season and was hooked to the format. It is an exciting opportunity not only for the top players but also for fans, as they get to pick a team with their favorite players to cheer on. I am excited to be a part of the American Gambits team, and I look forward to meeting my teammates in London."

Grandmaster Anish, who has been signed up as the Icon player by PBG Alaskan Knights, said, "The unique format of the Global Chess League takes the competition to a higher level. I am sure that the fans will tune in to see the exciting battles between teams comprising top men and women chess players. I am delighted to play in my debut season with PBG Alaskan Knights, and I am looking forward to the exciting times ahead."

- The Global Chess League announced on Wednesday the list of Icon players for the second season to be held in London from 3 to 12 October at the Friends House.

Viswanathan, the five-time world champion and the icon player for Ganges Grandmasters, said, "The inaugural season was a huge success with some very exciting matches. Chess is widely played across the world, and the game being televised in this unique format will only add to its popularity. I believe that fans who tune in will get to see intense battles between teams playing chess at their highest level. I am excited to be back playing for Ganges Grandmasters." *—PTI*

Pope says 600 runs in a day within Eng's reach

LONDON, 24 JULY

Ollie Pope reckons England can breach the 600-run mark inside a day's play in Test cricket while ruling out any let-up to their ultra-aggressive 'Bazball' approach with the bat.

England hold the record for the most runs scored in a day when they piled up 588 for 6 on the second day of the Manchester Test against India in 1936, and Pope believes the current side under Ben Stokes can eclipse that.

"Sometimes we might score 280 to 300 in a day but that's OK and probably because we're reading situations. There might also be a day where we go and get 500 to 600 at some point in the future as well. And that's a cool thing to have," Pope was quoted as saying by 'BBC Sport'.

In December 2022, England smashed 506 runs on the opening day of the first Test against Pakistan in Rawalpindi.

England are currently 2-0 up in the three-match Test series against the West Indies after they followed up a victory by an innings at Lord's with a comprehensive 241-run win at Trent Bridge, Nottingham last week.

The third and final Test starts on Friday at Edgbaston.

The win in Nottingham was the first time England scored 400-plus in both innings of a Test match with totals of 416 and 425. Pope (121 in the first innings) was one of three England centurions in the second Test alongside Joe Root and Harry Brook.

Pope said there might be times England batters will have to "manage the game a little bit more" but that their attacking Bazball style under coach Brendon McCullum and captain Stokes has now become second nature. *—PTI*

Ollie Pope *PHOTO: PTI*